THE RIVAL PITCHERS

LESTER CHADWICK

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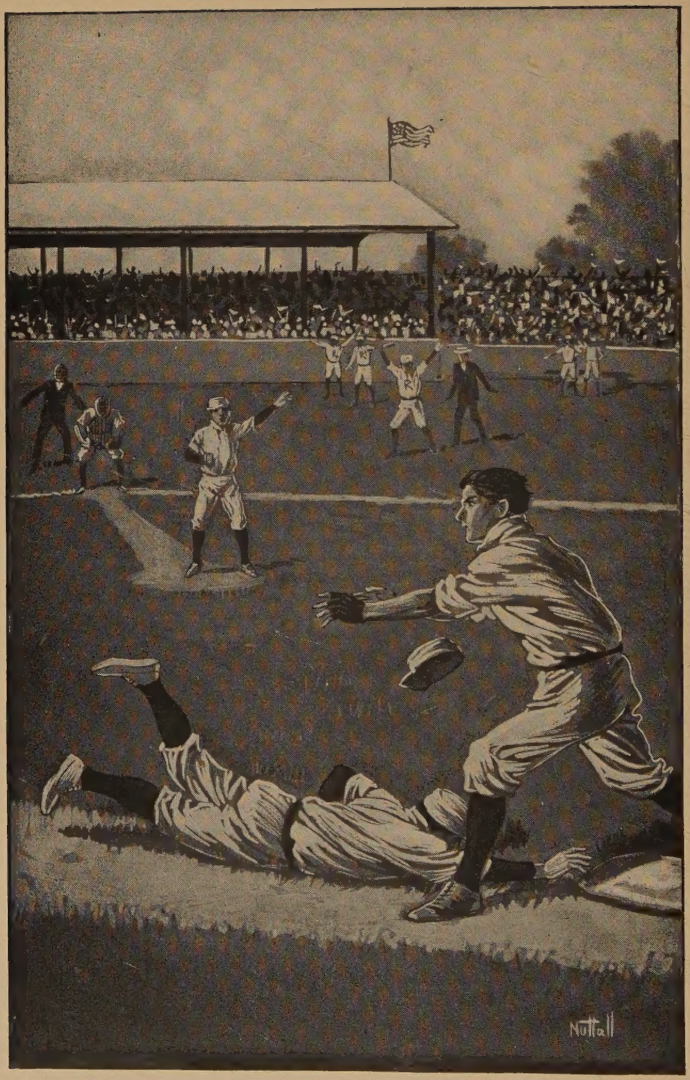
To Frank-

Christmas 1913.

Frank Mahler



THE GAME WON—PHIL, AMID A RIOT OF CHEERS, KEPT ON TO SECOND—*Page* 92

THE RIVAL PITCHERS

A Story of College Baseball

BY

LESTER CHADWICK

AUTHOR OF "A QUARTER-BACK'S PLUCK," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

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THE RIVAL PITCHERS
A Story of College Baseball

A QUARTER-BACK'S PLUCK
A Story of College Football

(Other volumes in preparation)

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THE RIVAL PITCHERS

CHAPTER I

THE OLD BELL CLAPPER

DOWN the green campus they strolled, a motley group of sturdy freshmen, talking excitedly. In their midst was a tall, good-looking lad, who seemed to be the center of discussion. Yet, in spite of the fact that the others appeared to be deferring something to him, he regarded them with rather an amused and cynical smile on his face. He paused to brush an invisible bit of dust from his well-fitting clothes.

"Well, aren't we going to make a try for it to-night?" asked one youth, whose hat was decorated with a silk band, yellow and maroon in color. "My uncle, who used to be a football coach here, says the freshmen always used to get it the first week of the term. My uncle——"

"Oh, let up about your uncle, Fenton!" exclaimed the lad on whose word the others seemed to depend a great deal. "I've heard nothing but

your uncle, your uncle, ever since you came here. Give us something new."

"That's all right, Fred Langridge, but my uncle——"

"There you go again!" interrupted Fred. "I guess I know what the custom is, as well as your uncle. He hasn't been here in fifteen years."

"I know that, but he says——"

"Say, if you speak uncle again, I'll land you one on the jaw, and that'll keep you quiet for a while." The words, in spite of their aggressiveness, were good-natured enough, and were spoken with a smile. Ford Fenton, who seldom took part in any conversation about college sports or frolics without mentioning his relative, who had been a well-known coach at Randall, looked first surprised, then hurt, but as he saw that the sympathies of his companion freshmen were with Langridge, he concluded to make the best of it.

"I guess I know what the customs are here," repeated the well-dressed lad. "Didn't I get turned down at the exams, and ain't I putting in my second year as freshman? I helped get the clapper last year, and I'll help again this term. But I know one thing, Fenton, and that's not two."

"What's that?" eagerly asked the youth who had boasted of his uncle.

"That's this: You may not get the clapper, but you'll get something else."

"Why, what's the matter?"

For answer Langridge silently pointed to the gay hatband of the other.

"Take it off—take it off," he said. "Don't you know it's against the sacred customs of Randall College for a freshman to wear the colors on his hat until after the flagpole rush? Don't you know it, I ask?"

"Yes, I heard something about it."

"Better strip it off, then," went on Langridge. "Here come Morse and Denfield, a couple of scrappy sophs. They'll have it off you before you can say 'all Gaul is divided into three parts,' which you slumped on in Latin to-day."

Fenton looked up, and saw approaching the group of freshmen which included himself, two tall lads, who walked along with the swagger that betokened their second year at college. The hand of Fenton went to his hat, to take off the offending band, but he was too late. The sophomores had seen it. They turned quickly and strode over to the group of first years.

"Would you look at that, Morse!" called Denfield in simulated wrath.

"I should say so," came the answer. "The nerve of him! Hi, fresh, what are you doing with that hatband?"

Then Fenton did something totally opposed to

the spirit of Randall College. He, a freshman, dared to talk back to a sophomore.

"I'm wearing it," replied he pertly. "Does it look as if I was playing ping-pong with it?"

The sophomores could hardly believe their ears. There was no imitation in the surprise that showed on their faces.

"For the love of Mike! Listen to him!" gasped Morse. "Grab him, Denfield! Wow! But things are coming to a pretty pass when a fresh talks like that the first week. Look out now, youngster, you're going to get a little lesson in how to behave to your betters."

The two sophomores reached out their hands to grab Fenton. He made a spring to get behind a protecting wall of his comrades, and for a moment it looked as if the second year lads would be bested, for there were at least fifteen freshmen. But Langridge knew better than to let his friends get into trouble that way.

"Let 'em have him," he advised in a low voice. "It's the custom, and he knew it. He deserves it all."

Thereupon the freshmen divided, and offered no opposition to the twain, who gathered in their man. Morse snatched off the hat with the offending band, and, while Denfield held the struggling Fenton, ripped off the ribbon. Then with his knife Morse began cutting the hat to pieces.

"Here, quit that!" yelled Fenton. "That's a new hat!"

"Softly, softly, little one," counseled Denfield. "I pray thee speak softly."

Though Fenton struggled to escape, the other easily held him, and the freshman was forced to witness the destruction of his nice, new soft hat. Having thus, as he believed, wiped out the insult offered, Morse carefully folded the ribbon and placed it in his pocket.

"Maybe you'll get a chance to wear it—after the pole rush," he said calmly. "I don't believe you will, for we're going to wipe up the ground with you freshmen this term. But if you do, I'll give you back your ribbon—er—what's your name, freshman?"

"Fenton," answered the humiliated one.

"Fenton what?"

"Ford Fenton."

"Say 'Fenton, sir,' " counseled Langridge in the other's ear.

"Don't you know how to reply to a gentleman?" asked Denfield fiercely, shaking Fenton from a neckhold he had. "Say sir, when you speak to a soph."

"Sir!" cried Fenton, for the grip hurt him.

"That's better. Now remember, no more ribbons until after the pole rush, and maybe not then. This to all you freshies," added Morse.

"Oh, we know that," put in Langridge. "But we'll all be wearing them after next week, and we'll be wearing something else, too."

"Nixy on the clapper, old chap!" called Denfield. "We won't stand for that."

"We'll see," responded Langridge. "All is not gold that doesn't come out in the wash."

"Ha! He speaks in parables!" cried Morse. "Well done, old chap! But come on, Denfield. I've got a date."

The youth holding Fenton gave him a sudden turn and twist that sent him spinning to the ground, and as he picked himself up the two sophomores walked off, as dignified as senators.

"Confound them!" muttered Fenton as he brushed the dust off his clothes. "I've a good mind to——"

"Easy, now," advised Langridge. "They're sophs, you know. Go easy!"

"But that's no reason why we should let them walk all over us!" exclaimed a sturdy lad, who had watched, with rising anger, the attack on Fenton. "I don't see why a crowd of us fellows should take whatever mean things they want to inflict."

"That's all right, Clinton," declared Langridge. "It's college custom, just the same as it is for us to take the clapper out of the chapel bell, have it melted up, and cast into watch charms. It's college custom, that's all."

"That's all right, it may be; but I like to see a fair fight!" went on Phil Clinton. "I could have tackled Morse alone, and he's bigger than I am."

"Maybe you could, but you'd have the whole sophomore class down on us if you did, and you know what that means. No, let it go. Fenton brought it on himself by wearing the band."

"I wish they'd tackled me," murmured the sturdy Clinton.

"I wish they had," echoed Fenton. "Look at my hat."

"That's all right, my uncle says I can have a new one!" piped up a shrill voice, in imitation of Fenton's usual tones.

"Holly Cross, or I'm a Dutchman!" exclaimed Langridge, turning quickly to glance at a newcomer, who had joined the ranks of the freshmen. "Where've you been, Holly?"

"Down by the boathouse, watching the crew practice. I'll give you an imitation of Billy Housenlager pulling," and Holly, or Holman, Cross, began a pretense of rowing in grotesque style.

"That's Dutch all over," admitted Langridge. "He goes at it like a house and lot."

"What's up?" demanded Holly, for he had seen from afar the little rumpus. "Has 'my uncle' been cutting up?" and he winked at Fenton.

"That's all right," began the aggrieved one, who did not seem to know when he was being

made fun of. "Look at my hat," and he held up the felt article, which was in tatters.

"New style," commented Holly casually. "Good for hot weather. Fine for a souvenir. Hand it around and we'll all put our initials on it, and you can hang it in your room. But say, is there anything doing?"

"There may be, to-night," answered Langridge.

"So—so?" asked Holly with a wink, the while he pretended to ring an imaginary bell.

"Keep it mum," was Langridge's answer. "You fellows want to meet at the boathouse to-night," he went on, as if giving orders. "Don't forget what I told you, and don't walk as if you had new shoes on. Take it easy. Be there at eight o'clock. Come along, Holly. I want to talk to you."

Langridge linked his arm in that of the newcomer, and the two strolled off to one side of the college campus, while the group of freshmen made their way toward one of the two large dormitory buildings.

"He orders us around as if we were working for him," objected Phil Clinton. "Langridge takes too much for granted."

"Well, he's been here a year, and I s'pose he feels like a soph," remarked Sid Henderson.

"Maybe, but that doesn't make him one. He thinks because he's got plenty of money, and comes from Chicago, that he can run things here, but

he's not going to run me," and Phil stuck out his square, well-formed jaw in a manner that betokened trouble.

"Aren't you gong to help get——" began Ed Kerr, who was quite a chum of Langridge.

"Easy!" cautioned Sid. "Here are some sophs."

A group of second-year students passed the freshmen with suspicious glances, but, seeing no offending colors, nor any other evidences of anything that could be taken to mean that their traditional prey had violated any rules, they saw nothing objectionable.

"Don't mention clapper," went on Sid.

"That's right," agreed Ed Kerr. "But I was going to say that Fred knows the ropes better than we do. If we stick to him we'll come out all right. It's no fun to try for—for it, and have the sophs give us the merry ha-ha."

"Oh, we'll try to get it," assented Phil Clinton, "but I don't like being ordered around."

"Langridge doesn't mean anything by it," spoke his friend.

"Well, I don't like it." And with that the lads passed into the dormitory, for it was nearly time for supper, and the rule was that they must come to the tables neatly dressed.

A little later Langridge and Holly strolled up

to the buildings where the three hundred students of Randall College were housed.

"Then you'll be on hand, eh?" asked Langridge.

"Oh, yes, I reckon so. But it seems like a lot of work for what we get out of it."

"Get out of it! You old anthropoid!" exclaimed Langridge. "What's the matter with you? Going back on the college customs?"

"What's an anthropoid?" asked Holly Cross, as he deftly juggled three stones with one hand. "How's that for good work?" he asked irrelevantly.

"An anthropoid is a second cousin to a cynic," answered Langridge, "and a cynic is a fellow whose liver is out of order, which makes him have a bad taste in his mouth and get out of the wrong side of bed."

"Get out, you camel-backed asteroid!" cried Holly. "There's nothing the matter with my mouth, and I can get out of either side of my cot without knowing which side it is."

"Are you coming to-night?"

"Sure, I'll be there."

"All right; that's what I want to know."

Holly and Langridge passed into the east dormitory, where they had been preceded by the other group of freshmen. This building was given over to rooms for the first year and senior students, while in the west dormitory the sophomores and

juniors, as being the least likely to indulge in hazing and horse-play, did their studying and sleeping.

There are few institutions of learning better known throughout the Middle West than Randall College. It had been established several decades before, and though small at first, and unimportant, the thorough methods used soon attracted attention from parents who had sons to educate. Many a well-known man of to-day, who has made his mark in the world, owes part of his success, at least, to Randall College, and he is proud to acknowledge it. In time, because of liberal endowments, and because the institution became better known, its influence spread, until, from a small seat of learning, it became a large one, and now students from many States attend there.

Randall College was most fortunately situated. It was on the outskirts of the town of Haddonfield, and thus was connected by railroad with the outside world. It was far enough away from town to be rid of the distractions of a semi-city life, yet near enough so that the advantages of it could be had.

The buildings composing the college consisted of several in addition to the main one, containing the classrooms, lecture halls, laboratories, study rooms and the like. There was Biology Hall, a magnificent gift from an alumnus, and Booker

Memorial Chapel, a place of worship, containing some wonderful stained-glass windows. The chapel was the gift of a lady, whose only son had died while attending the school. Back of the main college building, and somewhat to the left, was a modest structure, where the faculty, including Dr. Albertus Churchill, the venerable president, had their living apartments.

Farther to the rear of the main structure were two buildings that contained dormitories and rooms for the three hundred or more students. There were two dormitory buildings, the east and the west, and, for obvious reasons, one, the eastern, was inhabited by the freshmen and seniors, while the juniors and sophomores lived, moved and had their being in the other.

The gymnasium, which was well equipped, was located a little to the left of the west dormitory, and it adjoined the baseball diamond and the football gridiron. Skirting the edges of this big, level field were the grandstands and bleachers, for sports had a proper and important part in life at Randall.

Standing on the knoll in front of the main building, one looked down a gentle, grassy slope to Sunny River, which twisted in and out, lazily enough, around a hill that contained the college and the grounds. The campus swept down, in a sort of oval, to the very edge of the stream. And

there is no finer sight in all this country than to stand on the steps of the main building some fine summer day (or, for that matter, a wintry one) and look off to the river. If you are patriotic, and of course you are, you will take off your hat to the colors that fly from a tall flagpole in the center of the campus.

Sunny River was a beautiful stream, not as broad as some rivers, but sufficiently so to provide boating facilities for the Randall students. On it, every year, was held the annual regatta, Randall and some other institutions participating. There was a large boathouse on the edge of the river, located on your left as you stood on the campus, facing the water.

Sunny River flowed into Lake Tonoka, which was about a mile below the college, and in the midst of the lake was Crest Island. What exciting times that lake and river have seen during the summer season! What rowing races! What swimming races! What jolly picnics! And, let us whisper, what mysterious scenes on nights when some luckless candidate was initiated into a secret society!

On the farther side of the river from the village, and near the junction with the lake, was a sort of park, or summer resort. A trolley line ran from it to the town of Haddonfield, but the students more often preferred to walk to the village, rather

than wait for the cars, which ran on uncertain schedules.

At the lower end of Lake Tonoka, just over the line in another State, was Boxer Hall, a college somewhat smaller than Randall, while to the west, fifteen miles away, was Fairview Institute, a co-educational school that was well patronized. The three institutions had a common interest in sports, and there was a tri-collegiate league of debating clubs that often furnished milder, if more substantial, excitement.

It was an evening in early April, of the new term after the Easter vacation, that a number of freshmen, who had taken part in the lively scene of the afternoon, and some students who had not, met silently and stealthily back of the boathouse on the back of Sunny River. The night was cloudy, and thus it was darker than usual at that hour.

"Have you fellows got the rope?" asked Langridge in a whisper, as he took his place at the head of the little force.

"Of course," answered Phil Clinton.

"There's no 'of course' about it," retorted Langridge arrogantly. "I've seen the time it's been forgotten."

"What are we going to do with it?" asked Sid Henderson.

"Use it to hang a soph with," spoke Holly

Cross. "Prepare to meet thy doom!" he added in a sepulchral voice.

"Cut it out, Holly," advised Langridge. "I'm afraid the sophs are on to us as it is."

"Then we'll rush 'em!" exclaimed Phil Clinton aggressively.

"No, that won't do any good. We'd never get the clapper, then."

"I know a good way," spoke Fenton. "My uncle says——"

"Say, you and your uncle ought to be in a glass case and in the museum," called Holly. "Dry up, Fenton!"

"Where's the Snail?" asked Langridge.

"Here," replied Sam Looper, who, from his slow movements, and from the fact that he loved to prowl about in the dark, for he could see well after nightfall, had gained that nickname. "What do you want?"

"Will you climb up the rope after I get it in place?"

"Sure."

"Then come on," whispered Langridge. "I guess it's safe now. There don't appear to be any one stirring."

The mysterious body of freshmen moved off in the darkness toward the Booker Memorial Chapel. Their object, as you have probably guessed, was to climb to the steeple and remove

the clapper from the bell, a prank that was sanctioned by years of custom at Randall College. Once the big tongue of iron was secured, it would be taken to a village jeweler, who would have it melted up and cast into scores of miniature clappers.

These, when nickel-plated, made appropriate watch charms for the freshmen class, and suitably, they thought, demonstrated their superiority over their long-time rivals, the sophomores. For it was the duty of the second-year students, if possible, to prevent the taking away of the clapper. The purloining of it must always be done the first week after the Easter vacation, and if this passed by without the freshmen being successful, the clapper was safe, immune and inviolate. Hence the need of haste, as but two more nights were left. Once the clapper was taken the class had to contribute money enough to buy another for the voiceless bell.

Silently, as befitted the occasion, the lads made their way from the rendezvous at the boathouse toward the chapel. Their plan was simple. On top of the cupola which held the bell was a large cross. It was the custom to tie a stone, or some weight, to a light cord, throw the weight over the cross, and by means of the thin string haul up a heavy rope. Up this rope some freshman would climb, remove the clapper, and slide down again,

while his comrades stood guard against any attack of sophomores.

"Who's going to throw the stone?" asked Ed Kerr, as he walked along beside Langridge.

"I am, of course."

"Oh, of course," repeated Clinton in a low voice. "You want to run everything."

"Well, Fred Langridge is a good pitcher," spoke Sid Henderson. "He's likely to make the 'varsity this year."

"Um!" was all Phil said.

The boys reached the chapel, and, under the direction of Langridge, the cord and rope were made ready.

"Got a good stone?" asked the leader.

"Here's a hunk of lead," replied Ed. "I made it on purpose. It's not so likely to slip out as a stone."

"That's good. Hand it over."

The lead was soon fastened to the cord.

"Look out, now, here goes!" called Langridge. "I'm going to pitch it over. Be all ready, Snail."

He stepped back, and tossed the lead, intending to make the cord fall across one arm of the cross. But either his aim was poor, or he could not discern well enough in the darkness the outlines of the cross.

"Missed it!" exclaimed Clinton.

"Well, so would you," growled Langridge. "Some one stepped on the cord."

"Let Snail try," suggested Henderson.

"I'm doing this throwing," declared Langridge curtly.

"It doesn't look so," murmured Phil.

Langridge tried again, but with no success.

"Hurry," spoke Kerr. "The sophs will be out soon."

Langridge made a third attempt, and failed. Then Snail Looper called out in an excited whisper:

"Here come the sophs! Cut it!"

"No!" cried Langridge. "Hold on! I'll get it over now. Fight 'em back, boys!"

CHAPTER II

A GOOD THROW

THERE was excitement in the ranks of the freshmen. They formed in a ring about Langridge, who once more prepared to throw the weight over the cross.

"Hold 'em back, boys!" he pleaded. "We can do it. It won't take five minutes to get the clapper after the rope's up."

"But first you've got to get it up," replied Clinton.

"And I will. Cut out your knocking. Here goes!"

Off to the right could be seen a confused mass of shadows moving toward the chapel. They were the sophomores, who in some mysterious manner had heard of the attempt to take the clapper, and who now determined to prevent it.

"They're coming," said Kerr ominously.

"I know it," answered Langridge desperately. "Keep still about it, can't you?" he asked fretfully. "You make me nervous, and I can't throw well."

"Humph! He must be a fine pitcher if he gets nervous," declared Clinton.

Langridge glanced at the circle of freshmen about him. There were enough of them to stand off the rush of the sophomores, who, as they came nearer, were observed to be rather few in number.

"Here it goes!" exclaimed the rich youth, and he threw the lead weight with all his force. It struck the cross, but did not carry the cord over the arm.

"At 'em, fellows! At 'em!" yelled the leading sophomores. "Tear 'em apart! Don't let 'em get the clapper!"

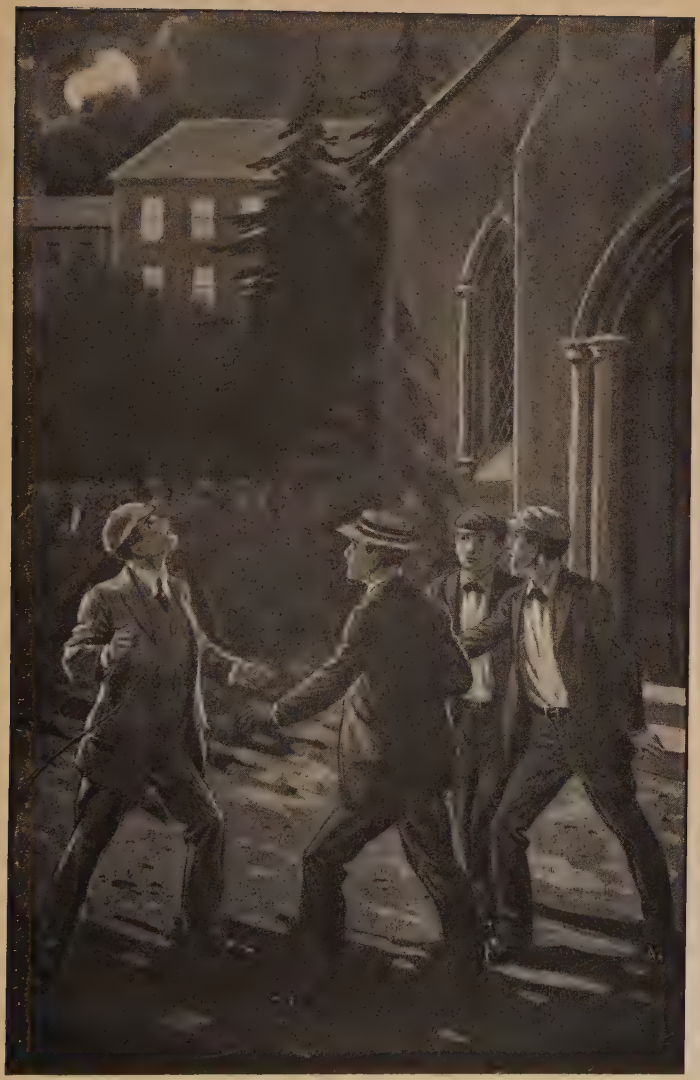
There was a struggle on the outer fringe of freshmen, who crumpled up under the attack of the second-year lads.

"Hold 'em back!" yelled Langridge. There was no longer any need of caution.

The sophomores were hurled back by the weight of superior numbers. Seeing this their leader hastily sent for reinforcements. Meanwhile the others renewed their attack on the freshmen. Langridge prepared to make another cast.

"He'll never do that in a week!" exclaimed Clinton in disgust. "Why doesn't some one who can throw try it?"

"I'll throw, all right!" cried Langridge, as he untangled the cord, which was in a mass at his feet. He was about to make another attempt,



"HURRY! THEY'RE GOING TO RUSH US"—*Page* 23

when a lad stepped to his side—a lad who was a stranger to the others. Where he had come from they did not know.

"Let me try," he said pleasantly. "I used to be pretty fair at throwing stones. Your arm is tired, I guess."

"Who are you?" demanded Langridge suspiciously. "Are you a soph? How'd you get here?"

"I'm not a soph," replied the other good-naturedly, in a pause that followed a second hurling back of the attackers, who withdrew to wait for reinforcements. "I'm a freshman. My name is Parsons—Tom Parsons. I'm a little late getting here this term. In fact, I just arrived to-night. I was on my way from the depot to the college, when, as I crossed the campus, I heard what was up. As I'm a freshman, I decided to join in. Hope it's all right."

"I don't know you," said Langridge hesitatingly, fearing this was a trick of the enemy. "You may be a soph——"

"No, I assure you I'm not," said Tom Parsons. "Wait a minute. Is there any one here named Sidney Henderson?"

"That's my name," replied Sid.

"Then you ought to know me. I'm to room with you, I believe. At least, I have a letter from Dr. Albertus Churchill to that effect. He's quartered me on you."

"Oh, that's all right!" cried Henderson. "Parsons is a freshman, all right. I didn't remember about it. Sure, he's all right. It's a queer time to arrive, though."

"Isn't it?" agreed Tom good-naturedly. "Couldn't help it, though. Train was late."

"Here come some more sophs!" called Kerr.

"Get that line over, for cats' sake!" demanded Clinton.

"I will!" exclaimed Langridge.

"Shall I throw it?" asked Tom. "I guess——"

"I'll do my own throwing," replied the other coldly.

"If he knows how to throw, let him try," suggested Clinton. "We want to get that clapper some time to-night."

"Go ahead, Fred," urged Kerr. "I guess your arm ain't in shape yet."

Langridge murmured something, but as there arose a general demand that he let some one else try, and as a new body of sophomores were rushing down to the attack, he handed over the lead weight.

"Can you pitch?" he asked of Tom.

"A little," was the quiet reply.

The two faced each other in the darkness, as if trying to see of what stuff each was made. It was the first time Tom Parsons and Fred Langridge met, and it was rather prophetic that this first meet-

ing should presage others which were to follow, and in which the rivalry thus early established was to be fought out to the bitter end.

"Hurry!" urged Kerr. "We're going to have our hands full now. They're going to rush us."

Tom Parsons grasped the lead weight, and shook the cord to free it of kinks. He stepped back a few feet, looked up in the darkness to where the cross was dimly visible, and then, drawing back his arm, sent the lead with great force and straight aim up into the air.

"A good throw!" cried Sid Henderson, as the moon, just then coming out from behind a bank of clouds, showed that the cord had fallen squarely over one arm of the cross, the weight coming down to the ground on the other side of the chapel.

"A good throw!" echoed Clinton.

"Humph!" growled Langridge. "I could have done as well on the next try."

"Haul up the rope!" ordered Kerr. "Lively, now!"

Several lads ran around to where the end of the cord, still attached to the weight, was on the ground. All around a struggle was going on, the freshmen endeavoring to hold back the attacking sophomores. Now and then a second-year lad would break through the protecting fringe, only to be hurled or pushed back again by the defenders.

Quick hands hauled on the cord, and the heavier

rope rose in the air and slipped over the cross. It was held down on one side by several turns taken around a post. Then it was made taut at the opposite end.

"Shin up now, Snail!" cried Langridge, who had again assumed command of things. "Quick! We'll hold the rope! Get the clapper!"

The night-loving youth moved slowly forward. But, in spite of his lack of speed, he managed to make good time up the rope, which he skilfully ascended hand over hand.

"Don't let 'em get the clapper!" "Break through and yank down the rope!" were the cries of the sophomores.

Again and again they hurled themselves against the circle of freshmen, who protected the two groups of their comrades holding either end of the rope.

"Hold 'em, boys! Hold 'em!" pleaded Langridge.

Tom Parsons threw himself into the thick of the fight. He gave blows, and he took them, all in good nature. Once, when a small sophomore broke through, Tom picked him up bodily and deposited him outside the circle of defenders.

"Say, he's got muscle, all right," observed Clinton to Kerr.

"That's what. There's class there, all right

Shouldn't wonder but what he'd give Langridge a rub for pitcher, if he plays baseball."

"Oh, he'll play, all right. A fellow who can throw as he did can't help playing."

"Who's that?" asked Sid in a breathing spell, following a temporary repulse of the enemy.

"The new lad—Tom Parsons."

"Oh, yes, he plays ball," said Sid. "His father knows my father. They used to be chums in Northville, a country town. That's how Tom happened to come here, and he asked if he couldn't room with me. He plays ball, all right."

"Pitch?" asked Clinton laconically.

"I think so. Look out, here they come again!"

The conversation was interrupted to repel another rush.

"Look out below!" suddenly called the Snail from his perch near the cupola.

"Got the clapper?" yelled Langridge.

"Yep! Here it is!"

Something fell with a thud in the midst of a group of freshmen. It was the bell clapper, which the Snail had unhooked. Tom Parsons made a dive for it.

"I'll take that!" exclaimed Langridge roughly, as he shoved the newcomer to one side and grabbed up the mass of iron.

"I was only going to help," replied Tom good-naturedly.

"Cut with it!" ordered Kerr. "We can't hold 'em much longer, and we don't want 'em to get it now. Skip, Langridge. Take some interference with you."

As if it was a football game, several lads made a sort of flying wedge in front of Langridge, with him inside the apex, and, thus protected, he bored through the mass of sophomores.

"After him!" yelled several second-years, who had become aware of the trick. "He's got the clapper!"

Most of the lads rushed away from the chapel, only those remaining who were holding the rope taut. Some of these even started away.

"Hold on!" yelled the Snail. "I'm up here yet! I want to get down!"

"Don't leave Sam up there!" cried Kerr. "Hold the rope, fellows, until he shins down."

Several freshmen ran back.

"I'll help hold," volunteered Tom, though there was a temptation to join the fighting throng that surrounded Langridge and his defenders.

The Snail slid to the ground, the rope was pulled from the cross, and the lads, coiling it up as they ran, hastened to the aid of their freshmen comrades.

CHAPTER III

A BASEBALL MEETING

"SWAT 'em, freshmen! Swat 'em!" was the rallying cry of the first-year lads.

"Get the clapper! Get the clapper! Don't let them get away with it!" implored the sophomores.

There was a confused mass of arms, legs and bodies. The mass swayed, now this way, now that. Tom Parsons, the Snail, Ed Kerr and some others who had remained behind to manage the rope, threw themselves into the fray. Their help turned the tide of battle, and the sophomores, who were outnumbered, turned and fled, leaving the freshmen victors of the fight.

"Have you got the clapper, Langridge?" called Kerr anxiously.

"Of course," and the lad addressed produced the unwieldy souvenir from underneath his coat.

"Then get it to our room and hide it," went on Kerr. "They'll not give up yet. We've got to expect a hunt for it to-night."

Kerr and Langridge, who roomed together,

started away, the clapper of the bell safe in their possession, while the others brought up the rear, a guard against a possible unexpected attack. But none was made, and presently the long, iron tongue was safely hidden in the rooms of the freshmen.

"I say," remarked Tom Parsons to Sidney Henderson, when the excitement had somewhat calmed down, "I wonder if I'd better report to the proctor, or to Dr. Churchill to-night. I've just entered, you know."

"What's the use?" asked his companion. "You're to room with me—that's settled. Mr. Zane, the proctor, won't want to be disturbed. Besides, I rather think that Dr. Churchill, our venerable and respected head—by the way, we call him Moses, you know—I say I don't believe he'd thank you for coming."

"Why not?"

"Well, you see, there's been more or less of doings to-night. Of course, the faculty are not supposed to know that we take the bell clapper, but you can bet they do know. They pretend not to, and take no notice of it. If you were to go and ring Moses up at this hour, he'd have to become aware—take cognizance, he'd call it—of our little racket. That might make trouble. No, on the whole, let the proctor and Moses alone."

"Why Moses?"

"What's that?"

"I say—why Moses?"

"Oh, I see. Well, we call him that from his name. Church and hill. Moses went up on a hill to preach about the church, hence—aha! see?"

"You needn't draw a map," answered Tom, "even if I am from the country."

"That's so, you're from Northville, where dad used to live."

"That's right."

"Well, I wouldn't boast of it, if I were you—especially when any of the fellows are around."

"Why not?"

"Well, of course it's all right with me—I understand, but they might make fun of you—rig you, you understand."

"Yes, I understand, but I don't mind being 'rigged,' as you call it. I fancy I can do some 'rigging' on my own hook."

"All right, it's your funeral. I've warned you."

"Thanks. But if you think it's all right for me to go right to your room, and bunk, without telling Dr. Churchill—excuse me, Moses—why, I'm willing."

"That's all right. Come on, we'll go to my room. There may be some excitement after a bit."

"How?"

"Well, the sophs may try to get the clapper back. They generally do. We'll have to help fight 'em in that case."

"Of course. By the way, what do you fellows do with the bell tongue, anyhow?"

Sid told about the watch charms.

"You'll get one," he added. "That was a good throw you made."

"Well, maybe. It was hard to see in the dark. I guess What's-his-name could have made it, only he tired himself all out."

"Oh, you mean Langridge."

"Is that his name?"

"Yes. I don't like him very well, but he's got lots of dough, and the fellows hang around him. He's manager of the baseball team."

"He is?"

"Yes. Got the election because he's willing to spend some of his money to support the team."

"Well, that's white of him."

"Oh, yes, Fred's all right, only for what ails him. He's got some queer ways, and he thinks some of us ought to bow down to him more than we do. But I won't, and I guess Kerr is getting sick of him. Some fellows think he got to be manager, and keeps the place, because he used some money. There's been talk about it."

"Who's Kerr?"

"The fellow with the black hair. He's catcher on the nine."

"I see."

"Are you going to play ball?" asked Henderson as they entered the room Tom was to share.

"I'd like to. Is there any chance?"

"Guess so. The nine's not all made up yet. They're going to have a meeting to-morrow, or next day, and try out candidates. You'll have as good a chance as any one. Where do you play?"

"I've been pitching."

Henderson uttered a low, long whistle.

"What's the matter?"

"That's Langridge's pet place. He thinks he's a regular Christy Mathewson."

"Well, I haven't disputed it," replied Tom quietly. "But if you don't mind, I'm going to take off my shoes; my feet are tired. Think any sophs will come?"

"It isn't likely now. They'd been here some time ago if they were coming. Guess I'll turn in. I've got to get up early and do some boning on my trigonometry. It's rotten stuff, ain't it?"

"Oh, I rather like it."

"Um!" was all the answer Sid made, as he prepared for bed, while Tom also undressed.

Tom Parsons had come to college, not because he wanted to have "a good time," nor because it was the fashion, nor because his father had the money to send him. Tom came because he wanted to gain knowledge, to fit himself for a place in life, and he earnestly wanted to learn. At the

same time he did not belong to the class known as "digs." Tom was a sport-loving lad, and it needed but a look at his well-set head, on broad shoulders, his perfectly rounded neck, his long, lithe limbs, small hips and deep chest, to tell that he was an athlete of no little ability.

Tom's hair was inclined to curl, especially when he was warm from running or wrestling, and when it clung about his bronzed forehead in little brown ringlets, he was an attractive figure, as more than one girl had admitted. But Tom, to give him his due, never thought about this.

He was tall and straight, and he could do more than the regulation on the bars, or with dumb-bells, while on the flying rings, or at boxing, you would want to think twice before you challenged him.

But Tom's specialty, if one may call it such, was on the baseball diamond. He had played in all the positions ever since he was a little lad, and he and the other country boys laid out a diamond in a stubble field, with stones for bases, and a hickory club for a bat. But Tom had a natural bent toward pitching, and he gradually developed it, principally by his own unaided efforts, together with what he could pick up out of athletic books, or what was told to him by his companions. In twirling the ball Tom's muscles, hardened by work on the farm, served him in good stead.

For Tom Parsons was a farmer lad, though, perhaps, not a typical one. His father was fairly well-to-do, and had a large acreage in the town of Northville. Tom was an only son, though there were two sisters, of whom he thought the world.

When Tom had finished his course at the village academy, and had expressed a wish to go to college, his father consented. He furnished part of the money, and the rest Tom supplied himself, for he was an independent sort of lad, and thought it his duty to take part of his savings to gain for himself a better education than was possible in his home town.

So Tom, as you have seen, came to Randall, and of the manner of his arrival, due to a combination of circumstances, you have been duly informed. He made two resolutions before coming. One was to stand well in his classes, and the other—well, you shall learn the other presently.

Tom slowly undressed. He was not used to change, for he had been a "home boy" for years, though he was no milksop, and did not in the least mind roughing it. But, after the reaction of the night, when he was in the little room with the lad who was to be his chum, he felt a bit lonely. It was new and strange to him, and he thought, not without a bit of regret, of the peaceful farmhouse in Northville, with his mother and father seated in the big, comfortable dining-room, talking, and

the girls reading books, or sewing, under the light of a big lamp.

Tom looked slowly about the little room that was to be his "home" for some time to come.

Randall was not a rich college, and, in consequence, the dormitories and study apartments were not elaborately furnished. There was a sufficiency, and that was all. Of course, there was nothing to prevent the students from adding such articles to their rooms as they wanted, or thought they desired, and some, whose parents were wealthy, had nicely furnished studies.

But the one occupied by Sid and Tom was quite plain. There was a worn rug on the floor, so worn, in fact, that the floor showed through it in several places. But Sid remarked that it was a virtue rather than otherwise, for it obviated the necessity of being careful about spilling things on the rug, and also did away with the necessity of a door mat.

"They can't harm the rug, no matter how much mud they bring in," Sid had said, when Tom suggested getting a new one.

There were two small iron cots or single beds in the apartment, a bureau for each lad, a closet for clothes, but which closet contained balls, gloves, bats, sweaters, old trousers and other sporting "goods," almost to the exclusion of clothes. And then the closet did not contain it all, for many articles overflowed into the room, and no amount

of compression sufficed to get things entirely within the closet. There was always something sticking out. Several old chairs, one a lounging one with a broken set of springs in the seat, a sofa that creaked in every joint, like an old man with rheumatism, a table with a cover spotted with ink, a shelf of books, an alarm clock, some cheap pictures, prints from sporting papers, and water pitchers and bowls completed the furnishings.

Tom wondered, as he fell asleep, whether the sophomores would make a further attempt to regain the clapper, but they did not, and the night was undisturbed by further pranks. At chapel next morning Dr. Churchill, after the usual devotions, announced with a twinkle in his deep-set eyes that the reason there was no bell to call the students to worship was because the tocsin was clapperless.

"It mysteriously disappeared during the night," went on the president, "and—er—well, ahem! I think matters may take their usual course," he finished quickly, trying hard not to smile.

It was always this way. By "usual course" Dr. Churchill and the students understood that the freshmen would meet, make up by contributions enough to buy a new clapper, and the incident would be closed until another year brought new freshmen to the college.

This course was followed. Langridge, who was

president of the class, called a meeting that afternoon, the amount needed was quickly subscribed, and the money was taken to Dr. Churchill.

"Why do you encourage that nonsense?" asked Professor Emerson Tines, the Latin instructor (dubbed "Pitchfork" by the college lads in virtue of his name). "Why do you submit to it?"

He happened to be with the president when Langridge brought in the money.

"I don't submit to it, Professor Tines."

"But you encourage it."

"No; I simply ignore it."

"But the clapper is taken year after year."

"Is it?" asked the doctor innocently. "Well, now, so I have been informed by the janitor, but, you know, of my own knowledge I am not aware of it. It is simply hearsay evidence, and I never like to depend on that."

"But, my dear sir, don't you *know* that the clapper is taken by the first-year pupils?"

"Perhaps I do," answered the good doctor with a smile, "but I'm not going to admit it. I was young once myself, Professor Tines."

"So was I!" snapped the Latin teacher as he went to his own apartments.

"I—I doubt it, and that's not hearsay evidence, either, I'm afraid," murmured Dr. Churchill, as he resumed his study of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics.

Tom Parsons, after chapel, introduced himself to Dr. Churchill and the proctor, and was properly enrolled on the college books. He was assigned to his classes, and soon began to feel himself at home among the students.

"Well, are you going?" asked Sid of Tom that afternoon, as they came from the last recitation.

"Going where?"

"To the baseball meeting. Didn't you see the notice?"

"No."

His roommate showed it to Tom. It was a note on the bulletin board in the gymnasium, stating that all interested in the baseball nine, whether as players or as supporters, were invited to meet in the basket-ball court that afternoon.

"Of course I'm going," declared Tom.

The size of the throng that gathered in the gymnasium was proof enough of the interest taken in affairs of the diamond by the Randall students. There was talk of nothing save bases, balls, strikes, sacrifices, bunts, home runs, fielding, pitching, catching, and what-not. Langridge called the meeting to order, and in a few words explained that the object of it was to get the team in shape for the spring games.

"I understand that there are a number of new men with us this year," he went on in easy tones. There was no use in denying that the well-dressed

lad knew how to talk, and that to get up in front of a throng did not embarrass him. "I hope, as manager as well as a player," he went on, "that we shall find some good material. The team needs strengthening in several places, and it is up to us to do it. Now I have a list here of the former players, and the names of some who have already signified a desire to try for places this year. I'll read them."

It was quite a long list, and Tom Parsons, listening to it, began to wonder if he would have any chance among so many.

"If there are any others who would like to put their names down as candidates, I'll take them," announced Fred.

Several stepped forward, and their names were noted, together with the positions they desired to play.

"Go on up," urged Sid to Tom.

The country lad advanced to where Langridge stood.

"I'd like to try for a place," he said.

"Oh, you would, eh?" asked the other, and the sneer in his voice was evident. "Well, don't you think you'd better wait until the hayseed is out of your hair?" and he laughed.

"Here's a comb," retorted Tom quickly, extending a small pocket one. "Maybe you'll give me a hand. I can't see the back of my head."

"That's one on you, Langridge," cried Phil Clinton. "That's the time you got yours good and proper."

Tom was smiling good-naturedly, but the other was scowling.

Tom looked Langridge straight in the eye, and the other turned aside. The country lad put back the comb into his pocket.

"What's your name?" growled Langridge, though he knew it full well.

"Tom Parsons."

"Where do you want to try for?"

"Pitcher."

There was some confusion in the room, but it ceased at Tom's reply.

"Pitcher!" exclaimed Langridge.

"I said pitcher," replied Tom quietly.

"Why—er—I'm pitcher on the 'varsity nine!" fairly snarled Langridge. "That is, I was last year and expect to be again. Do you mean pitcher on the scrub?"

"On the 'varsity," spoke Tom, smiling the least bit.

Langridge shot a look at him from his black eyes. It was a look that boded Tom no good, for the former pitcher had recognized in the new arrival a formidable rival.

"Put his name down," called Sid. "You might get a sore arm, and we'd need a substitute."

Langridge glanced quickly at the speaker.

"His name is down," he answered quietly—more quietly than any one expected him to speak. "Are there any others?"

No one answered.

"We'll meet for practice to-morrow afternoon," went on Langridge. "Of course, it's understood that no one plays on the team who doesn't contribute his share of expenses," and he looked straight at Tom Parsons.

Without a word the country lad drew out a wallet, none too well filled, to judge by the looks of it.

"What's the tax?" he asked, still smiling.

"The—er—the finance committee attends to that," was the answer Langridge made. "They'll meet to-night."

Evidently he had not expected so ready a compliance on Tom's part.

"Well, if it's all settled, I move we adjourn," suggested Ed Kerr. "Let's have a scrub game, for luck."

At that moment a lad came hurrying into the gymnasium.

"Where's Langridge?" he asked excitedly.

"Here," replied the baseball manager. "What's up?"

"Hazing!" was the somewhat breathless answer.

"The sophs are going to try it on to-night, to get square about the bell clapper. I just heard it."

"That's the stuff!" cried Phil Clinton. "Now we'll get a chance to have some fun."

"And I'll pay 'em back for slashing my hat," added Ford Fenton. "My uncle says——"

But what his respected relative had remarked was not learned, as the boys rushed from the room to prepare for the ordeal that they knew awaited them.

CHAPTER IV

THE HAZING

"WHAT sort of hazing do they do?" asked Tom Parsons of Sid Henderson as the two youths followed their companions from the gymnasium.

"Oh, all sorts. It's hard to tell. Mostly they come in your room and make a rough house, but not too rough, for the proctor doesn't stand for it. They'll tumble you about, tear down any ornaments you may have up, pour a pitcher of water in the bed, and make things unpleasant generally."

"Are we supposed to stand for that?" There was a grim look settling on Tom's face.

"Well, what can you do when three or four big sophs are holding you?"

"Not much, that's a fact. But I'm going to fight back."

"So am I, but that's all the good it'll do. If they don't put enough on you in your room they'll tackle you outside, when you're alone, and maybe chuck you into the river or lake, or make you walk Spanish, or force you to parade through town do-

ing the wheelbarrow act. Oh, you've got to take some hazing in one form or another."

"Well, I don't mind getting my share. So they're coming to-night, eh?"

"So the twin said."

"The twin—who's he?"

"The little fellow that brought word. I don't know whether he was Jerry or Joe Jackson. I didn't look closely enough to see."

"Why, is it hard to tell?"

"Sure. They're two brothers, Jerry and Joe. They come from some town in New Jersey. We call them the 'Jersey Twins,' and they look so much alike it's hard to tell them apart. The only way you can tell is when they're playing ball."

"How then?"

"Why, Jerry plays right field, and Joe left. Then it's easy to say which is which; but when they come to bat it always happens that some one on the other team makes a kick. They think we're ringing in the same man twice, and we have to explain. That's what I've heard. Of course, I've only been here a week."

"Oh, then they've played here some time?"

"Yes; they're juniors. It was mighty white of Jerry or Joe, whichever it was, to tip us off. Now we'll be ready for the sophs."

"What can you do?"

"Well, if you know in time, as we do now, we

can take down the best things in our room, so they won't get busted, and we can hide the bed clothes, so they won't get soaked. Then we can put on our old clothes. It's no fun to have a good suit ruined, especially when you don't find new clothes growing on trees."

"That's right. Let's go to our room and make ready."

"Oh, we've got plenty of time. I fancy it won't be until after dark. The only thing is for all of us freshmen to keep together if we go out. For if they catch two or three of us alone they'll put it all over us. But I guess there won't be any scrub game now. The sophs would break it up."

"When do we have any rest from them?"

"In about two weeks. After the pole rush."

"The pole rush?"

"Yes. It's an old college custom, as Fenton's uncle would say. We freshmen form a ring about the big flag-pole on a certain night and the sophs try to pull us away. If they make us leave inside of fifteen minutes it means we can't wear the class college colors until next term. If we win, why, we sport a hat like Fenton had—the one Morse and Denfield slashed up."

"I see. But, say, I'd like to know more about the ball team. Does Langridge run it all?"

The two lads by this time were in their room, where they proceeded to hide under the beds and

bureaus their choicest possessions against the prospective raid. It was close to the supper hour and they did not have much time.

"No, Langridge doesn't run everything," answered Sid. "He's manager, that's all."

"That seems a lot."

"Well, it is in a way, though it's only because he has plenty of cash and isn't afraid to spend it. But he couldn't be elected captain. He tried, but was defeated his first term, though he made the managership."

"Who is captain?"

"Bricktop Molloy was last year, but this season we're going to have a new one. I guess Dan Woodhouse stands as good a show as any one. He's a senior and a fine player."

"Woodhouse—that's an odd name."

"Yes, we call him Kindlings for short. I'm going to vote for him."

"So will I then; I'll depend on your say-so."

"I fancy you threw a scare into Langridge," went on Sid as he carefully slid under a mat at the edge of the bed a picture of a football game.

"How so?"

"Telling him you wanted to try for pitcher. It was like stepping on his corns. He thinks he's got a cinch on that position. Always has ever since he helped win a game last year."

"Has he?"

"Well, I don't know. It depends on who is captain. Langridge wants to see Ed Kerr elected captain. If that happens, he and Ed will run things to suit themselves. Ed's quite a chum of Langridge, though Ed's a better fellow all around. The only reason some of the fellows won't vote for Ed is that he's too thick with Langridge. But if old Kindlings is elected he'll not take any orders from Langridge."

"Langridge doesn't seem to be very popular with you," observed Tom.

"He isn't. I don't like him. Yet he's all right in a way. You see, he's pretty well off in his own right. His father died, leaving him quite a sum, and when his mother died he got more. His uncle is his guardian, but he doesn't look after Fred very closely, and Fred does pretty much as he pleases. Now that isn't good for a lad, though I don't mind admitting I wish I had plenty of money. But Langridge is something of a sport. He has good clothes—better than most of us here—he has all he wants to spend, and he's liberal with it. He has quite a following and lots of fellows like him. He doesn't care what he does with his money, and that's the whole thing in a nutshell. That's why he's manager and for no other reason. But, as I said, Woodhouse won't stand for any of his dictation."

"Maybe I'll get a chance then," mused Tom.

"I guess you will. I'd like to see another good pitcher on the nine. Maybe we'd win more games if we had a good one."

"I don't know whether I'm a good one or not," answered Tom. "I want to try, though. Back home they used to say I had a good delivery."

Sid did not answer at once. He was thinking that to pitch on a country nine was vastly different from doing the same thing on a good-sized college team. But he did not want to discourage his roommate.

"Well," he said after a pause, in which he surveyed the somewhat dismantled room, "I don't know whether it's pitching, or catching, or fielding, or what it is our team needs, but it's something. We're at the bottom of the league and have been for some years."

"What league is that?"

"Oh, I forgot you didn't know. Well, it's the Tonoka Lake League. You see, our college, Boxer Hall and Fairview Institute have a triangular league for the championship. But we haven't won it in so long that the memory of man runneth not to the contrary, as the legal documents have it. Last year we had a good chance to be second, but Langridge got a glass arm in the final game and we were dumped. That's why I say we need a new pitcher, and I'm glad you're going to try for it."

"Maybe I'll do worse."

"Well, Langridge sure does deliver a good ball," said Sid slowly; "the only trouble is that he——"

He stopped suddenly and seemed embarrassed.

"Well?" asked Tom questioningly.

"Maybe you'll find it out for yourself," concluded Sid Henderson. "There's the supper gong. Come on. There'll be hot work after a bit."

Puzzling somewhat over the answer his chum had made to the question regarding Langridge and wondering what it was he might find out for himself, Tom followed Sid to the dining hall, where throngs of students were already gathered.

There was something in the air that told of mischief to come. The sophomores, who dined together, maintained a very grave and decorous air, utterly out of keeping with their usual mood. There was silence instead of talk and laughter at their table.

"They're almost as dignified as the seniors," remarked Phil Clinton to Tom as he took a seat next to him. "It means trouble. Look out."

"Oh, we're looking out," replied Tom.

Few lingered over the meal, and, going back to their room, Sid and Tom took their best clothes and him them in a closet at the end of the long corridor. It was a closet used for the storage of odds and ends.

"There, I don't believe they'll find them there," spoke Sid. "Now we're ready for them."

On their way back to their apartment they heard some one preceding them down the long hall.

"Who's that?" asked Sid.

"I don't know," replied Tom. "Let's take a look. Maybe it was some one spying on us."

They hastened their steps and saw some one hurry around a corner.

"Did you see him?" asked Tom.

"Yes," answered Sid slowly.

"Was it a soph?"

"It was Langridge," came the hesitating answer.

"I wonder what he was doing up here?" inquired Tom.

"I wonder too," added his chum.

There was a rush of feet in the hall below and the sound of voices in protest.

"Here they come!" cried Sid. "The hazers! Come on!" And he slid into the room, followed by Tom. They slammed the portal shut and bolted it.

The noise below increased, and there was the sound of breaking doors.

"Do they smash in?" asked Tom, to whom a college life was a new experience.

"Sure, if you don't open."

"Going to open?"

"I am not. Let 'em break in. They'll have to pay for the damage."

In spite of lively scenes on the floor below, the noise was kept within a certain range. Neither the freshmen nor the sophomores desired to have their pranks interrupted by the college authorities, which would be sure to be the case if the fun grew too hilarious.

The noise seemed to be approaching the room of Sid and Tom.

"Here they come," whispered the country youth.

Sid nodded and there was a grim smile on his face. An instant later the door was tried.

"The beggars have locked it!" some one exclaimed.

"Break it in!" another added.

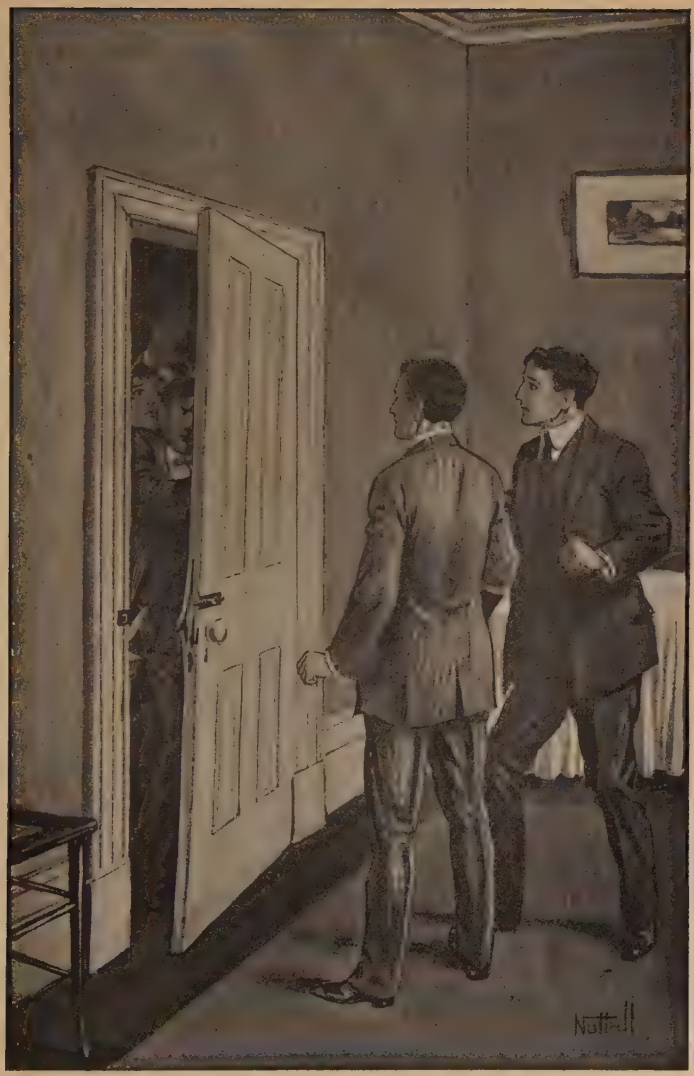
"Ask 'em to open first," counseled a third. "We've smashed so many now that we'll have a pretty bill to pay."

"Oh, blazes, give it your shoulder, Battersby," exclaimed a loud voice.

"Going to open, fresh?" called out a student on the other side of the portal.

"Nope!" cried Sid.

There was a moment's pause and then some one hurled himself at the door. The bolt held for a few seconds, but on a second rush there was a splintering of wood, the screws pulled out and the portal flew open, giving admittance to a crowd of sophomores.



ON A SECOND RUSH THERE WAS A SPLINTERING OF WOOD—*Page* 50

CHAPTER V

A SCRUB GAME

"STRIPPED!" exclaimed a tall sophomore with a broken nose. "The beggars have stripped their den!"

"I told you some one had been giving us away," added another. "They knew we were coming. Didn't you, fresh?" and he turned to Sid and Tim.

"Sure," replied Sid as he looked around the room, which was bare of the articles that usually afforded the second-year men an opportunity for causing annoyance.

"Who tipped you off?" asked he of the broken nose.

"Yes, tell us," chimed in several others. "We won't do a thing to him but make him sorry."

"Oh, we had a dream," put in Tom with a grin.

"Ha! Here's a fresh fresh!" exclaimed "Broken-nose." "Well, fellows, let's give 'em a shower bath, anyhow."

"Look under the beds," suggested a big sophomore.

"Nope; haven't time, Gladdus. Here, some of you hold 'em while the rest of us douse 'em."

In an instant Sid and Tom were grasped each by half a dozen hands and pulled to the middle of the room. Then Broken-nose and some others took the two water pitchers and poured the contents over the two freshmen. It was not a pleasant ordeal, but Tom and his chum bore it unflinchingly. It was useless to struggle.

"Oh, this is no fun!" exclaimed Gladdus. "They don't fight."

"The odds are too heavy," retorted Tom quickly. "I'll take any one of you alone," he added, and he looked as if he meant it.

"Let me take him on," pleaded a tall sophomore.

"No—none of that," declared Broken-nose, who was addressed as Fenmore. "We've got lots to do yet. I wonder where their good clothes are. They've got on old togs. We'll give 'em a soaking."

Tom and Sid were glad that they had hidden their garments in the hall closet. There was a hasty search on the part of the sophomores, but as nothing was disclosed the second-year men prepared to leave.

"Come on," ordered Fenmore. "There's no water left in their pitchers, anyhow."

"Oh, we could get more H_2O if we could find their togs," spoke another.

Just then another second-year youth came along.

"I know where their clothes are," he said. "In the closet at the end of the hall. Langridge——"

"Shut up!" cried Gladdus.

"Come on, fellows!" called Fenmore. "We'll soak 'em good."

Sid groaned as the sophomores released him and Tom and made a run for the closet.

"We'd ought to have scattered 'em," he said. "Now we'll have to wear wet duds to chapel tomorrow. We can't go in these," and he looked at his dripping garments—clothes in which he did cross-country running and played tennis—old and somewhat ragged and muddy habiliments.

"Did you hear what that soph said?" demanded Tom.

"You mean——"

"I mean about Langridge. He gave us away. He told them where our clothes were; the mean sneak!"

"That's right," chimed in Sid. "That's what he was doing up here—spying on us. "Oh, I'll pay him back all right!"

"So will I!" declared Tom fervently as a triumphant shout down the corridor announced that their clothes had been discovered. The garments, dripping wet and all out of shape, were thrown into their room a little later.

"Well, wouldn't that put your nerves on the

gazabo!" exclaimed Sid disgustedly. "Oh, Langridge, I'll have it in for you!"

The hazing went on until after midnight and then the dormitory quieted down. Scarcely a freshman escaped and those who absented themselves from their rooms were due to be put on the grill later.

Tom and Sid sat up late, wringing as much of the water as they could from their clothes and drying them somewhat by inserting an electric light bulb in the arms of the coats and the legs of the trousers. Fortunately their bedding was not wet or the boys would have passed a miserable night. As it was they did not have a good one, and they arose early to hang their moist clothes out of the window to let the morning sun finish the work of drying.

But they were not the only ones in this plight, and it was a bedraggled lot of freshmen who appeared at chapel—that is, all but Langridge. He was spick and span as he always was, dressed in expensive clothes.

"Didn't they get at you?" asked Sid as he and Tom caught up to the wealthy youth on the way to class.

"Get at me?"

"Yes, your clothes don't seem to have suffered."

"Oh, this is another suit. They wet one for me, but I had this put away."

"And no sneak went and told the sophs where you put it, did they?" asked Tom.

"What's that?" asked Langridge quickly, and he turned a bit pale.

"I say no sneak gave you away?"

"I don't know what you mean," and Langridge turned aside.

"Oh, yes, you do," said Sid quickly. "You know all right and we know, and what's more, you'll get what's coming to you all right. That's all from yours truly, but look out—that's all—look out, Fred Langridge!"

"I don't know what you're talking about," was the cool retort, and then the students passed into the class room.

It was two days later that the miniature clappers, which had been made from the tongue of the big bell, were received, and a proud lot of freshmen they were, including Tom Parsons, who attached them to their watch chains.

"Now, if we win the pole rush, we'll be all to the merry," exclaimed Phil Clinton as he walked along the campus toward the gymnasium. "I'm just aching for a chance to pummel some of those sophs. They certainly made a rough house of my room the other night."

"Oh, we'll get the chance all right," remarked Sid. "The rush is a week from to-night. But say,

how about the baseball election? Isn't Langridge taking his own time calling it?"

"He sure is. He's trying to work up votes for Kerr for captain, but he can't do it. The fellows haven't anything against Ed, but he's too thick with Langridge. I'm for old Kindlings."

"So are we," put in Tom.

"They've got to hold the election to-morrow," said Phil. "That's the last day, according to the rules. Why, we haven't had a bit of practice yet. We don't know who's going on the scrub and who has a chance for the 'varsity. I hope I can get center field."

"Had you rather play there?" asked Tom.

"I always have. I fancy I know that position better than I do any other. But, to tell you the truth, I like football better than baseball. I'm going to try for the eleven this fall."

"I hope you make it. But what's going on?" asked Tom as he saw a little commotion about the gymnasium.

"It's a scrub game," exclaimed Sid. "That's the stuff. Come on. Maybe we'll get a chance. Langridge sees that he's got to get things going."

They hurried to the gymnasium and found that preparations were under way for a scrub game. There was also a notice on the bulletin board stating that the election for captain would be held the following day.

"I wonder if he's got enough votes for Kerr?" mused Sid. "I hope not—for the sake of the team."

The crowd, including students from all four classes of the college, moved off toward the diamond. Rivalries were forgotten in the interest in the game. The lads were not in uniform, but had on old clothes. Langridge was issuing orders and two temporary captains were chosen, they selecting their men. Bob, or "Bricktop" Molloy, the captain of last year, had one scrub team, and Pete Backus, who rejoiced in the nickname "Grasshopper" from the fact that he was always trying to see how far and how high he could jump, had another. Langridge assumed the rôle of manager, though there was little to manage.

"Now play lively, boys," he urged. "I want to arrange for some other games this season besides those in the league, and we want to win some of 'em."

To his delight Tom found himself chosen by Bricktop, together with Sid and Phil Clinton. Langridge held a whispered conversation with Backus, the other captain, and was promptly chosen on that hastily formed nine.

"I'll pitch and Ed Kerr'll catch," Langridge announced, as if that settled it. And it was noticeable that Backus did not make a protest, though he was as good a catcher as was Kerr.

"Will you pitch for us, Parsons, me lad?" asked Bricktop with just a trace of rich Irish brogue. "Sure and I heard what ye did, me lad, the night of the clapper."

"Well, that was mostly luck, I guess," replied Tom modestly, "though I'd like the chance to pitch now."

"Sure, then, an' you'll have it," replied the Irish lad with a twinkle in his honest blue eyes. "Come on, fellows. We're last at the bat."

"Hold me down, somebody!" exclaimed Dutch Housenlager as he turned a hand spring and came down so close to Molloy that the former captain was nearly sent over. "I'm feeling like a two-year-old."

"That's all right, Dutch, me lad," exclaimed Bricktop, relapsing into a broader brogue as his feelings came uppermost. "This isn't a stable, though, and we can dispense with the horse play until after the game if you can accommodate yourself to the exigencies of the occasion," and he spoke much after the manner of Dr. Churchill, for Bricktop, in spite of the fact that he was a senior, "grave and reverend," like fun and his joke. "If you will kindly resume the upright stature befitting a human being," he went on, "you may try to stop whatever balls come in the direction of shortstop, for there's where ye'll play."

"All right," answered Dutch good naturedly.

"I'm agreeable, my fair captain. But would you mind keeping your hat on? When the sun strikes your red-gold locks it dazzles my eyes."

"Go on wit' your blarney!" exclaimed Molloy, making a punch at Housenlager, who skilfully ducked it.

The diamond was in fine shape, for it had been cut and rolled and the base lines marked off in readiness for the opening of the season. The grass was like velvet and the clean, fresh green, contrasted with the brown earth of the diamond proper, the long white lines, the new bases and the level field made a picture that rejoiced the heart of every lad.

"Wow! isn't it great?" cried Tom. "And the smell! Do you smell the green grass, Sid, and the earth, and—and the baseball smell? Isn't it great?"

"Cheese it!" cried Phil Clinton with a laugh. "You'll be spouting poetry next."

"I wish I could," returned Tom a little more soberly. "I never get out on a ball field but I want to orate something like Thermopylæ or Horatius at the Bridge. The fever of the game gets in my blood."

"There is something in that," admitted Phil. "Oh, it's a great game. There's none greater except football, and when I see the gridiron marked off and hear the 'ping' of somebody's boot against

the pigskin my heart begins to thump and I catch my breath and want to take the ball to batter down a stone fence and make a touchdown."

"Bravo!" cried Sid. "You're as bad as Tom."

"Quit talking and get to practice!" exclaimed a voice at the rear of the lads, and they turned to see Langridge.

"Say, who told you to give orders?" asked Sid quickly. "Bricktop is our captain."

"Well, we're going to have a little warm-up practice first," remarked Langridge. Then he turned to Tom and said: "So you're going to pitch against me?"

"It seems so."

"Humph!" was all Langridge said as he walked away.

Two or three good batters on each side began knocking flies for the others to catch and Tom and his chums soon found themselves warming up in earnest. The country lad discovered that he could judge the balls quite accurately and he made some good throws from a long distance.

"Play ball!" suddenly called Bricktop Molloy. "Come on, fellows! Out in the field. Parsons, let's see what sort of a twirler you are."

Tom went to the box. He was a trifle nervous, but he controlled himself as well as he could. The first man up was Langridge, and there was an un-

pleasant look on the face of the rich youth as he faced his rival.

Tom sent in an out curve and he was pretty sure it was going over the plate. But he heard the umpire cry: "One ball!" and he was much surprised. There was a mocking smile on the face of Langridge. Tom held the next ball rather longer. He threw in a peculiar little drop. Langridge saw it coming and struck savagely at it, but a resounding "thump" told Tom that the horsehide had landed safe in Molloy's mitt.

"One strike!" yelled the umpire, and Tom's heart was glad.

"That's the way to do it!" cried Phil Clinton from center field. "Strike him out!"

Langridge hit the next ball, though it was only a weak liner, which Tom stopped and threw over to first, but there was no need, for Langridge had seen the uselessness of running.

"One out. Go on with the game," sang out Bricktop.

CHAPTER VI

THE POLE RUSH

Tom managed to strike out the next man, but the third batter knocked a two-bagger, and Kerr, who followed, sent a beautiful long fly to right field, where Jerry Jackson muffed it. There was wild delight on the part of Pete Backus and his men when they got in three runs before Tom managed to strike out another player, retiring the side.

"Well, that's not so bad," spoke Bricktop, but there was some dubiousness in his tone.

"My pitching was bum," acknowledged Tom, "but I'll do better next inning."

"Of course you will, me lad," said Captain Molloy kindly. "It's a new ground to you."

There was a confident air about Langridge when he took his position in the box and it was somewhat justified when he struck out the first two men in quick succession.

"He's doing better than I thought he would," said Sid.

"He's a good pitcher," admitted Tom honestly,

for he saw that his rival had something that he himself lacked—a better control of the ball, though Tom could pitch a swifter curve.

Tom was third at the bat. Now a good pitcher is usually a notoriously bad hitter. Tom proved an exception to the rule, though perhaps he had not developed into such a good pitcher yet that it applied in his case. He faced Langridge confidently and even smiled mockingly as a swift ball came in. Tom was a good judge of it and saw that it was going wild, so he did not attempt to strike it. His judgment was confirmed when the umpire sang out:

"Ball one!"

Langridge looked annoyed and sent in a swift one. Tom's bat met it squarely and it went well over the center fielder's head.

"Go on! go on, me brave lad!" yelled Molloy, his brogue very pronounced. "That's the stuff!"

"Take two bases! take two!" cried Phil.

"Make it three! make it three!" begged Sid, and three Tom made it, for he was a swift runner, and the ball rolled provokingly away from the fielder who raced after it.

"Well, you can bat, anyway, me lad," observed Molloy as Tom came in on a safe hit made by Sid a little later.

"Does that mean I can't pitch?" asked Tom with a smile.

"Not a bit of it. It only accentuates it, so to

speak. You're all right—*facile princeps* as the old Romans have it—which, being interpreted, means you can come in and sit at our training table."

Tom's side only gathered in two runs, however, and from then on up to the eighth inning the team Langridge was on held the lead, the score at the beginning of the ninth inning being 10 to 8 in favor of Backus' men. That inning Tom and his chums rather went to pieces as regarded fielding, nor did Tom shine brilliantly in the box. He struck out two men and then he seemed to lose control of the ball. The bases were filled, two men knocking a one and two bagger respectively and another getting his walking papers. Then Tom got nervous, and just when he should have held himself well in hand to keep the score down, he gave another man a chance to amble easily to first on four balls and forced in a run.

There were cries of derision from the opposing players and an ominous silence on the part of Captain Molloy and his men. The next man got a one-bagger and the player who followed him knocked a pop fly, which Molloy, who was on third, missed. The inning ended with three more runs in favor of Langridge and his mates, making the score 13 to 8.

"Six runs to win and five to tie," murmured Molloy. "Can we do it, boys?"

"Sure," said Phil Clinton confidently. Phil always fought to the last ditch. But it was not to be.

Tom made one run and Sid another, but that was all. Langridge struck out his last man with the bases full and the game ended.

"I thought you were a pitcher," sneered Langridge as the teams filed off the field, and there were several laughs at Tom's expense, for he had not made a good showing in the box.

"Sure he can pitch," cried Molloy, coming to Tom's defense. "The ground was new to him, that's all."

"Rats!" retorted Langridge, and Tom was too humiliated to make a reply.

"Just the same he'll make a good pitcher," said Mr. James Lighton, the coach of the 'varsity, who had strolled out to watch the practice. "He has a swift ball, but he lacks control. We can make a first-class pitcher of him, Molloy."

"I'm sure I hope so," murmured the red-haired youth. "We didn't do very well last year with Langridge, though he seems to have improved today."

"So will young Parsons," declared the coach. "You watch him. I'll take him in hand as soon as the team is in shape. He'll probably have to go on the scrub first, but he won't stay there long."

But Tom did not hear these comforting words, and it was with rather a bitter feeling in his heart that he went to his room to dress for supper.

"You'll be better next game," said Sid, trying to console him.

"Maybe there won't be any next game for me," was Tom's reply. "I saw Kerr and Langridge talking together, and I'm sure it was about me."

"That's all right. Kerr isn't going to be captain of the 'varsity."

"Are you sure?"

"Sure. I've got a straight tip. We've votes enough to elect old Kindlings Woodhouse."

And so it proved the next day, when the election was held. Dan Woodhouse received forty more ballots than did Kerr and his election, after the first test, was made unanimous, a compliment always paid. Then baseball matters began in earnest. Candidates were chosen, Coach Lighton ordered regular practice and established a training table. Tom was much chagrined when he found that he was named for pitcher on the scrub, while Langridge got the coveted place as pitcher on the 'varsity, but Sid told his chum that the scrub was but a stepping stone to the final goal. And when the coach began to take Tom in hand and give him some much-needed instruction about control Tom began to feel that, after all, perhaps he had a chance.

It was about a week later, following some rather hard practice on the diamond, that a hurried knock

was heard on the door of the room occupied by Sid and Tom.

"Come," called Sid, looking up from his Latin book.

"Pole rush to-night!" cried Dutch Housenlager, poking his head in and rapidly withdrawing it, as though he feared a book would be hurled at him. "Meet on the campus at eight o'clock. Old clothes—it's going to be a hard fight."

"That's the stuff!" exclaimed Sid, throwing his book across the room. "Come on, Tom. We'll have a battle royal with our traditional enemies, the sophs."

The pole rush was like the cane or cannon rushes held in other colleges. Half a dozen of the strongest of the freshmen formed a circle, with linked arms about the big flag pole on the campus. About them in concentric circles their chums formed a series of defensive rings. Then the sophomores came at them with a rush, seeking to displace the first-year lads and arrange themselves in a circle about the pole. If they succeeded in doing this inside of fifteen minutes it meant that the freshmen could wear no college colors their first term. It was to this rush that Tom, Sid and their friends hurried when Dutch and some others went about to the various rooms sounding the rallying cry.

Out on the campus that soft spring evening was a motley crowd of students. On one side were

gathered the sophomores and on the other the freshmen.

"My, there are a lot of 'em," remarked Phil Clinton. "I shouldn't wonder but they've rung in some seniors on us."

"No, they wouldn't do that," declared Sid. "They're a big class."

Langridge and some others were going about selecting the men who were to form the first circle about the pole. Tom and Phil, who were both sturdy lads, were chosen for this honor.

"In place! in place!" cried the impatient sophomores.

"Line up! line up, fellows!" shouted Langridge.

Tom and his chums took their positions. The protectors formed about them.

"Hold fast, everybody!" cautioned Phil as he grasped Tom's arm.

"Here they come! here they come!" was the warning cry, and with a rush the sophomores hurled themselves against the mass of lads about the pole.

CHAPTER VII

TOM HOLDS HIS OWN

It seemed for a moment as if the first-year boys would be quickly shoved aside and their places taken by the sophomores, for so heavy was the impact that the outer and second lines of defense were broken through and the attackers were in the midst of the defenders.

"Throw 'em back! throw 'em back!" yelled Phil Clinton. "Tackle low!"

"Think you're playing football?" panted Tom, for some of his mates had been pushed against him and he almost lost his grip on Phil's arm.

"It's like a scrimmage," replied Phil. "That's the stuff, boys!" he added as the lines of defense formed again.

The freshmen by a fierce effort succeeded in blocking the advance of their enemies, and those who had penetrated part way into the circles were hurled back. But the battle had only just begun.

Once more came the rush of sophomores, the members of the class calling to each other encouragingly. There were more of them than there

were of freshmen, but the latter had the advantage of a firm base of support, for the lads nearest the pole clung to that and those adjoining them locked their arms or legs about those of their comrades, thus forming a compact mass.

"Pick 'em off one by one!" yelled Gladdus, one of the leading sophomores. "Bore a way in there, Fenmore, and some of you fellows. We ought to get them away."

"Hold fast! Hold fast, everybody!" cried Tom, for the joy of battle was upon him and his heart exulted in the struggle that was going on about him, in the pressure of bodies against his, the labored breathing, the panting, the fierce grips that were broken only to be made anew.

The sophomores now began other tactics. Several of them would grab a freshman in the outer circle. They would pluck him from the restraining grasp of his companions, and then, when a hole was thus made, other sophomores would bore their way in to repeat the process. So quickly was this done and so strong was the peculiar attack that, almost before the freshmen knew it, Gladdus and Fenmore, two of the most aggressive attackers, had reached the circle that was about the pole. The two boldly grabbed at Tom, at the same time calling out:

"Sophs this way! Sophs this way! Here's meat for us!"

Tom suddenly felt himself being pulled away from the pole. The grips of Phil Clinton on one side and Sid Henderson on the other were slipping from his arms.

"Hold fast! Don't let them take you!" cried Phil.

"I won't!" gasped Tom.

He thought of a trick he had acquired in wrestling. Quickly arching his back like a bow, he suddenly straightened it with a snap, and the holds of Gladdus and Fenmore were broken. They were hurled back and then other freshmen took them up bodily, thrusting them beyond the outer line of defense.

Then the whole body of sophomores quickly threw themselves against the freshmen, as if to force them away from the pole by weight of numbers. They nearly succeeded, and Tom and his fellow defenders of the flag staff thought their arms would be pulled out of the sockets. But, as if it was a second down in a fierce football game, the freshmen held their opponents and thrust the wave of sophomores back.

So it went on, the attack becoming fiercer until, when the timekeepers announced that there were but two more minutes left in which to hold or gain the pole, the second-year men seemed fairly to overwhelm the others.

"Tear 'em up! tear 'em up!" pleaded Gladdus.

"Hold, boys, hold!" begged Langridge. And hold they did, for when time was called the defenders were found with their arms still locked about the flag staff.

"We win, fellows!" yelled Tom, capering about, with his hands grasping those of Sid and Phil.

Then followed an impromptu war dance, while the vanquished sophomores filed away in the darkness, the exultant freshmen sending cheer after cheer out on the air.

"Here's where we wear ribbons on our hats!" cried Ford Fenton. "Now, I'd like to see any soph make me take it off."

He pulled from his pocket a band and fixed it to a new hat he had bought to replace the slashed one.

"You came prepared, didn't you?" asked Holly Cross. "Here, let me give you an imitation of a soph," and he held out the decorated hat, though the gaily decorated band could not be seen in the darkness, and pretending to regard it with horror, minced along like some grotesque dancer on the stage.

"Good! good!" cried his fellows.

"That's the stuff, Holly, old chap!" remarked Phil. "We'll have you in the next play."

"Why don't you fellows run the colors up on the flag pole?" proposed a lad who had stood watching the fun.

"That's it, Jerry Jackson!" exclaimed Sid. "Good idea."

"I'm not Jerry, I'm Joe," replied the Jersey twin.

"I'll have to take your word for it," went on Sid. "Say, you two ought to wear labels. We're always getting you mixed up."

Amid much laughter and joking a long streamer of yellow and maroon was fastened to the halyards and run up to the truck. Langridge had the colors with him, anticipating a victory.

"We ought to have a parade now," suggested Fenton. "My uncle says——"

"If you say uncle again inside of a week, we'll duck you!" cried Sid as he jostled Ford to one side. "We know him by heart by this time."

"I don't believe he ever had an uncle," declared Kerr. "But come on, fellows, let's have a parade."

The idea took at once, and the victorious freshmen formed in line and marched about the college buildings, singing songs and yelling joyfully, for it had been a good, fair, clean fight, and they had won.

"Let's go to Haddonfield and get out hat bands," proposed Langridge. "We'll all be wearing them in the morning."

As discipline was rather relaxed during the first two weeks of the term and as it was the custom for the victorious class to celebrate in some way the

idea was adopted and the joyous lads made for the town, which at their advent at once awakened from a sort of evening nap. They went to a dealer who made a specialty of college goods and soon all were decked out in the gay hat bands, all save a few who, like Fenton, had already provided themselves with the articles.

"I suppose you aren't used to such things as this down on the farm, are you?" asked Langridge of Tom sneeringly as they were about ready to depart for the college. "Corn husking bees and quilting parties are more in your line."

"Wa'al, thet's what they be!" retorted Tom quickly, imitating the nasal drawl of the typical farmer. "We folks down Northville way is some pumpkins when it comes t' huskin' corn. Was you ever there, sonny?"

His manner was so patronizing and the effect of his words and assumed mannerisms so odd that the lads about him burst out laughing, much to the annoyance of Langridge.

"Going to the post-office for the mail and meeting the pretty country girls was about the height of your enjoyment, wasn't it?" persisted the rich youth, who seemed bound to pick a quarrel with Tom.

"Wa'al, now you're talkin'," came the quick answer in the same drawl.

There was something rather strange about Lang-

ridge. His eyes seemed very bright and his cheeks were flushed. He evidently took Tom's acquiescence as an indication that the country lad was willing to have fun poked at him.

"I suppose you got lots of letters from the pretty country lasses, enclosing locks of their red hair," sneered Langridge.

"You bet I did," exclaimed Tom, still imitating a farmer's peculiarities, "but I want to tell ye suthin', an' when you come out Northville way, mebby you'll remember it." Then, suddenly becoming serious and with a change in his manner, he added: "I also used to get letters from gentlemen, but I don't believe you could write me one!" There was a snap in his words.

"What—what's that?" cried Langridge, taking a step toward Tom.

"You heard what I said," was the retort.

"That's the time you got yours all right, Langridge," exclaimed Phil Clinton. "You can't tell by the looks of a haystack how far a cow can jump, you know."

Langridge fairly glared at Tom. He seemed to want to make some reply, but the words stuck in his throat.

"I'll—I'll get——" he stammered, and then, turning on his heel, he linked his arm in that of Kerr and the two started off down the street.

"You held you own that time, Tom," said Sid as a little later they followed.

"Yes, I don't mind a joke, but he went a little too far. My people live in the country, and I'm proud of it, and proud of all my friends in Northville. But come on, let's get back to our room. I've got some studying to do."

CHAPTER VIII

AT PRACTICE

FOLLOWING the exciting scenes of the pole rush it was rather difficult for any of the lads to settle down to study that night, but for some it was a necessity, and Tom and Sid were in this number. Tom, by reason of missing the first week of the term, was a little behind his class, but he was a fine student, and the instructor saw that there would be no trouble for the lad in covering the lost ground. With Sid it was another matter. Though faithful and earnest, studying did not come easy for him, and, as he expressed it, he had to "bone away like a ground hog" to get facts and dates fixed in his mind. Consequently, because of the evening of fun, ten o'clock saw Sid and Tom busy in their room over their books.

For an hour or more nothing was heard but the occasional turning of the pages or the noise of a pencil being rapidly pushed across the paper. At length Tom, with a sigh of relief, closed his chemistry and remarked:

"There, I guess that will do for to-night. My eyes are tired."

"So are mine," added Sid. "I'm going to kiss this Latin prose good-night and put it to bed," and he threw the book under his cot. "Pleasant dreams," he added sarcastically. "Gee! but I hate Latin," he exclaimed.

"Why do you take it?"

"Oh, dad thinks I'll need it. I'd a heap sight rather learn to play the banjo."

"Not much comparison there, Sid."

"No, but don't mention comparison. That reminds me of grammar, and grammar reminds me of verbs, and verbs naturally bring to mind declension, and—there you are. Let's talk about something pleasant."

"What do you call pleasant?"

"Well, baseball, for instance, though maybe that isn't very pleasant for you, since you didn't make the first team."

"No," admitted Tom frankly, "it isn't pleasant to think about. I did want to get on the first team and I may yet. But I've learned one thing since coming here."

"That's good. Maybe I'd better call up Moses and tell him. He'll feel encouraged that some of the students are progressing."

"No, I wouldn't advise you to do that," spoke Tom with a laugh that showed his white, even

teeth. "In fact, what I've learned didn't have much to do with books."

"What was it?"

"Well, it's been made very clear to me that it's something different from being a big fish in a little puddle than acting the part of a small-sized finny resident in a more extended body of water, to put it scientifically."

"Meaning what, if you don't mind translating?" came from Sid as he stretched out on the rather worn and springless sofa.

"Meaning that I had an idea that I was about as good as the next one in the pitching line, but I find I'm not."

"Proceed," came calmly from Sid, who had his eyes shut.

"No, I'm afraid I might disturb your slumbers," said Tom quickly, and there was a curious change in his voice.

Sid sat up quickly.

"I beg your pardon, old man," he exclaimed. "I was listening all right and I'm interested, honest I am. Only my eyes hurt to-night. But it must be quite different, coming from a small village to a fairly large college. Did you have a good nine at Northville?"

"Well," went on Tom, somewhat mollified at his chum's interest, "we cleaned up all the other nines around there. I was considered a crackajack

pitcher, but I guess now the reason for that may have been that the others were rotten batsmen."

"There's something in that," admitted Sid judicially. "You see, things are peculiar here. Now take Langridge. Nobody, unless it's Kerr and a few others, cares much about him. Yet he's a fairly consistent pitcher, and he's the best they've had in some years, they tell me. Now our college has had rather hard luck on the diamond, especially in the Tonoka Lake League. There was a better chance of winning the championship last year than in any previous one, but we didn't make good. It wasn't altogether Langridge's fault. He didn't have very good support, I'm told. Now they've decided to keep him on, or, rather he's engineered things so that, as manager, he keeps himself on. And there are some hopes of pulling out somewhere in the lead of the league this season. But Langridge is his own best friend."

"And he keeps me from pitching on the 'varsity," said Tom somewhat bitterly.

"Can you blame him?"

"No, I don't know that I can," was the frank answer. "I s'pose I'd do the same thing. But I hope in time to be a better pitcher than he is."

"How are you coming on with the coach?"

"Fine. Mr. Lighton has given me some good pointers, and I needed them. My curves are all

right and so is my speed. It's my control that's weak, and I'm getting rid of some of my faults."

"We're going to have a practice game with you scrubs to-morrow or next day," said Sid. "Maybe you'll get a chance to show what you can do then."

"I hope so. I want to show Langridge that he isn't the only bean in the pot, to put it poetically."

"Very poetically," murmured Sid, who seemed to be dozing off.

"Say, Sid," exclaimed Tom suddenly, "do you remember what you started to say about Langridge the other day and stopped?"

"Yes."

"What was it?"

"I'd rather not tell. You'll probably find out for yourself before long. I did, though not many know it."

"You mean——"

"I'm not going to say what I mean. Only," and Sid suddenly sat up, "it may increase your chances of pitching on the 'varsity."

"I think I know," said Tom slowly, and he began to get ready for bed.

A practice game between the 'varsity and the scrub was called for the next afternoon. The first team was in rather disorganized shape yet. That is to say, not all the players were in permanent positions and shifts were likely to be made at any time as practice brought out defects or merits. It

was even said that some now on the 'varsity might be relegated to the scrub and some from the second team advanced. Tom secretly hoped so in his case, but his common sense told him he stood a slim chance. Langridge, of course, was pitcher on the first team and Kerr was the catcher. Kindlings Woodhouse played on third, where he could direct the efforts of his men.

When the scrub and regular teams were out on the diamond ready for the practice game Kindlings looked over his players.

"Where's Sid Henderson?" he asked.

"He got turned back in Latin at last class," volunteered Jerry Jackson.

"Here he comes now," added Joe Jackson, as if he was an echo to his brother.

Sid came running up, all out of breath, buttoning his blouse as he advanced.

"What's the matter, son?" asked the captain.

"That rotten Latin."

"Be careful," warned Kindlings. "Don't slump too often or you may put us in a hole. You aren't the only first baseman that ever lived, but you're pretty good, and I don't want to go to work training you in and have you fired off the team by the faculty for not keeping up your studies."

"Oh, I'll be careful," promised Sid confidently, and then the game started.

The 'varsity played snappy ball and the scrub seemed a bit ragged, naturally perhaps as there was less incentive for them to play hard.

"Brace up, fellows," implored Tom toward the close of the game. "They're only four runs ahead of us, and if we can knock out a couple of three-baggers we'll throw a scare into them. They're weak in right and left field. Soak the horsehide toward either of the twins, but don't get it near Phil Clinton. If he gets it within a foot of his mitt, it's a goner."

"It's a wonder you wouldn't strike out more men," said Fenton. "My uncle says that when he was a coach——"

"Play ball!" yelled the umpire, and the reminiscence was cut short.

The scrubs did "take a brace" and began finding the curves of Langridge, much to that pitcher's annoyance. Tom made a neat two-bagger, but died on third, though the score was bettered in favor of the scrub by two more runs.

Tom went to his box with a firm step and a more certain feeling about his ability than he had ever experienced before. He was sure he could strike out at least two men, and he did so, including Langridge and Holly Cross.

Holly, who was a good batter, was laughed at by his chums.

"You'll have to do better than that," warned Langridge.

"Do better yourself," retorted Holly. "I didn't want to hit it, anyhow. I was giving you an imitation of how close I could come to it and miss it."

"Those imitations don't do on this circuit," added the tall Kindlings. "It's mighty risky in a game."

"Oh, yes, in a game," admitted Holly with a laugh.

Tom gave one man a chance to walk and the next popped out a fly that Dutch Housenlager neatly gathered in. The game ended with no runs for the 'varsity in the last inning and they had beaten the scrub by only two runs.

"It might be worse," said Mr. Lighton grimly as the teams filed off the diamond. "It might be worse, Woodhouse, but I don't like it."

"Neither do I," admitted the captain gloomily. "We tackle Boxer Hall in the first of the league series next week, and I think I'll have to make some more shifts. What do you think of Langridge?"

"Well, he's all right—yet. If he doesn't——" The coach stopped suddenly, seemed about to say something and then evidently thought better of it. "At any rate," he finished, "if worst comes to worst, we can put Parsons in. He's improving every day, and with a little more coaching so that he isn't quite so awkward and can run better, he'll

make a star player. He'll be on the first team next year."

"He wants to get on this year."

"Perhaps he will," and with that the coach walked off rather abruptly.

CHAPTER IX

A GAME WITH BOXER HALL

THE grandstand was filled with cheering students. In one section were the cohorts of Randall College, led in giving their cries by "Bean" Perkins, who had a voice like unto that of some fog horn. There was a mass of glowing colors as flags and streamers were waved in the wind.

In another part of the stand a smaller but no less enthusiastic throng sent up exultant cries of rivalry, calling out repeatedly: "Boxer! Boxer! Boxer!"

Scattered among the students in each of the two divisions of the stand were girls and more girls, all of them pretty, at least in the eyes of their admirers, and all of them sporting one college colors or the other.

The bleachers were filled by ardent supporters of the game who were not so particular about having a roof over their heads and who, for one reason or another, had to look to the difference in cost between a grandstand ticket and one on the side benches.

It was the occasion of the first regular game of the season in the Tonoka Lake League between Randall College and Boxer Hall. As the opposing players came out for warm-up practice the yells, cheers and cries were redoubled, and the stands seemed a waving riot of colors, like some great bed of flowers.

The sounds of balls impinging on thick mitts, of willow bats cracking out hot liners or lofty flies were heard all over the diamond. Never had the grass seemed greener and never had the field looked so inviting. It was a perfect day for the game.

There was not a little anxiousness on the part of the Randall players as they "sized up" their opponents. They found them a sturdy lot of youngsters.

"They're playing snappy ball," observed Coach Lighton to Captain Woodhouse.

"Yes, and so will we," predicted Kindlings. "Just watch us."

"I intend to. That's why I'm out here. Now let me give you and Langridge a few pointers," and he called the pitcher to him, the three strolling off to one side of the field.

Tom Parsons was on hand, and it does him no discredit when it is stated that there was a feeling of envy in his heart. But it was honest envy. He wanted to get out on the diamond and do his share

in helping the Randall team to win. But he could only look on and cheer with the others.

To win or lose the first game meant much to either team. Not so much to Boxer Hall, perhaps, as that team had run Fairview Institute a close second for the championship, but to Randall the winning of the game might put the necessary "snap" into the lads, while to lose it might so discourage them that it would be well on in the season before they would "take a brace."

So it is no wonder that there was a feeling of nervousness on the part of the coach and the players.

The practice was over. The preliminaries had been arranged, the home team, Randall, having the privilege of being last to bat. Langridge, with final instructions from the coach, took his place in the box.

"Play ball!" fairly howled the umpire, and the game was on.

"Ping!" That was the sound of the bat colliding with the ball, the first ball that Langridge threw. Describing a graceful curve, the white sphere sailed up into the air. Ed Kerr, hoping it might be a foul, had thrown off his mask and was wildly looking for it, but it was winging its way toward Jerry Jackson in right field. A yell went up from the two hundred college supporters of Boxer Hall, but it was changed to a groan when one of the Jersey

twins neatly gathered in the fly and put the runner out. Langridge breathed a sigh of relief and struck out the next two men.

Not a man got to first on the Randall team in the initial inning. Kerr knocked a pop fly, but it was caught by the pitcher, who repeated Langridge's trick and sent the next two men to the bench in short order.

The next three innings saw goose eggs in the squares of both teams, the only hitting that was done being foul tips.

"It's a pitchers' battle," began to be whispered from seat to seat, and so it seemed. In the sixth inning Randall succeeded in getting a man to first on balls, and then began an attempt on the part of the onlooking students of that college to get the pitcher's "goat," which, being interpreted, meant to "rattle" him. That he had a "glass arm" was the mildest epithet hurled at him, but Dave Ogden, who was doing the twirling for Boxer Hall, only smiled in a confident sort of way and struck out the next man.

He was not so successful with Kindlings Woodhouse, and the captain hammered out a pretty fly that was good for two bases and sent Bricktop Molloy to third. The Randall boys were rejoicing now, for they saw a chance to score the first run. And the run itself was brought in by the blue-eyed and red-haired Molloy a moment later,

when Phil Clinton knocked a hot liner right between the Boxer Hall shortstop and the third baseman. But that ended the fun, though the score was 1 to 0 in favor of the home team.

This may have been an incentive to the visitors, for straightway they began pounding Langridge, and when the seventh inning ended the score was 4 to 2 in favor of Boxer Hall.

"Boys, we've got to down 'em!" said Woodhouse fiercely. "Don't let them put the game on ice this way. Don't do it. Take a brace."

In the eighth inning it looked as if there was going to be a slump in Randall stock. Langridge seemed to go to pieces and issued walking passes to two men, while he was batted for a two-bagger and a three-base hit. But with a gritting of their teeth the others rallied to his support, and though the visitors tucked away two more runs, making the score 6 to 2, at which their cohorts went into a fine frenzy, that was all they could do.

"Fellows, we're going to win!" cried Captain Paul, or "Pinky" Davenport, of the Boxers.

"Wait a bit, son," advised Kindlings dryly.

In the ending of the eighth there was a look of "do or die" about the Randall players. Tom Parsons felt himself gripping the sides of the seat until the board hurt his hands.

"Oh, if I could only get down there and play!"

he whispered to himself. "Why can't I? why can't I?" But he couldn't and he knew it.

Rather to their own surprise the Randall lads began finding the ball with surprising regularity. They batted it out "for keeps," as Molloy said, and they managed to tie the score. Then came the ever nerve-thrilling ninth inning in a close game. By great good luck, after he had given one man his base on balls, Langridge retired a trio in one-two-three order, and the score still stood a tie.

"Now, fellows, slam it into them. Wallop the hide off 'em—sting 'em—souse 'em—put 'em in brine for next year!" implored Holly Cross. "I'm first up, and I'm going to give you a correct imitation of a man making a home run."

But he didn't. Holly struck out miserably and he went away into a far corner and thought gloomy thoughts. Not for long, however. A resounding crack of the bat told him some one had knocked a fly. It was Phil Clinton, and he started for first like a deer with the hounds after it.

"My, but he can run!" exclaimed Tom in admiration. "Wouldn't he be fine covering the gridiron with the ball tucked under his arm? Go on! go on! That's the stuff, Phil! Pretty! pretty! That's a beaut! that's a beaut!"

Tom was on his feet yelling at the top of his voice. So were hundreds of other lads and girls also. But the Boxer third baseman was right near

the ball. He gathered it in and hurled it to first. It would have been all over with Phil, in spite of his magnificent run, except that the first baseman missed it, and Phil, amid a riot of cheers, kept on to second.

That sealed the fate of the Boxers. They "slumped" and went to pieces badly. The Randall lads garnered a run and so they won the game—the first of the season—by a score of 7 to 6.

And then what cheering there was!

CHAPTER X

A COIL OF WIRE

"BONFIRES to-night, fellows—bonfires multiplied by seven and one more!" cried Captain Woodhouse as he gathered the victorious nine about him and tried to hug each member. "Well played, my hearties! Yo ho! and a heave, yo ho! You shall dine sumptuously this day, an it please ye!"

"Hold hard there!" came the laughing but calming voice of the coach. "No breaking of training just because you've won the first game. Not much! You've got to buckle down harder than ever from now until school closes."

"Not even a cigarette?" asked Holly Cross, with a wink at his chums.

"Or an ice cream soda?" added Bricktop, his blue eyes twinkling.

"Go on," answered the coach with another laugh, not taking the trouble to return an answer to so obvious a question. "They are going to cheer you. Get ready to give them a yell in *return*."

The defeated team had gathered together. There was an air of sullenness about the members at losing the game, but this mood quickly passed under the entreaties of Pinky Davenport, who was a sportsman and "a good loser," as he besought his men to "perk up and wallop 'em next time." He called for three cheers for the victors, and they were followed by the Boxer Hall yell.

Back came three ringing acclamations and a "tiger" from Woodhouse and his mates, and their yell, as weird a combination of words and syllables as could well be devised, brought the whole concourse of spectators standing up in acknowledgment. Then came more cheering, and the nines disappeared into the dressing-rooms beneath the grandstand, while the crowds filed away.

"Well," remarked Sid as he walked along with Tom a little later, "it was a glorious victory, as the poem says. I don't exactly remember what it was all about nor how we did it, but ' 'twas a glorious victory.' "

"Now you're talking," was Phil Clinton's opinion. "Eh, Tommy, my lad?"

Tom was rather silent. He had cheered the nine until his throat ached, but somehow there was to him a hollowness in the winning.

"Too bad you couldn't play, old man," commented Sid. "I was almost hoping Langridge would strain his arm, and then——"

"Don't!" exclaimed Tom quickly. "That's bad luck, and, what's worse, Sid, it's treason."

"Then give me liberty or buy me a seltzer lemonade, Patrick Henry!" declaimed Phil. "Honest now, Tom, weren't you just aching to get out and play?"

"I was," replied Tom so earnestly that the others looked curiously at him. "I never wanted so much in my life to get into a game. Why, I'd even been glad to act as backstop. But it's all right," he added quickly. "It was a great game, and maybe I'll have a chance to play next year if I live that long," and he laughed, but there was no mirth in it.

"Mighty pretty lot of girls at the game," observed Sid, as if to change the subject.

"That's what," agreed Tom, glad to get on a more congenial topic.

"Oh, wait until we play Fairview Institute," said Phil.

"Why?" from Tom.

"Why, that's co-ed, you know—girl students as well as boys. And, say, maybe there aren't some stunners among 'em! They take in all the games at home and some that aren't, and they have flags and a yell of their own. They know how to yell, too. I was over to a ball game there last year, before I thought of coming to Randall, and say, it was immense. There was one——"

"Cut it out, if it's about a girl," advised Sid. "When you get on the dame question, you don't know where to stop. Sufficient to say that there are some."

"Yes, and then some more," added Phil. "Wait until we go there or they come here. Then you'll see something worth seeing."

"May the day come soon," spoke Tom with a laugh. "I sat next to a mighty pretty girl to-day all right. She had a flag of Randall colors, and when we won she waved it so hard she nearly put my eye out."

"Of course you made a fuss," said Phil with a grin.

"Of course. I turned to apologize and so did she, and I knocked her hat all squeegee and she blushed and I got red, and then—well, I up and asked her if she had a brother at college."

"That's going some," commented Sid. "What did she say? Did you learn her name? Where does she live?"

"Fair and softly, little one," advised Tom, with a sort of assumed superciliousness. "Trust your Uncle Dudley for that."

He walked on a few paces.

"Well?" demanded Phil.

"Is that all?" cried Sid.

"No," said Tom, provokingly mysterious about it.

"Go on. Tell a fellow, do."

"What's the use?" asked Tom. "I saw her walking off after the game with another fellow."

"Who?" demanded his two chums.

"Langridge."

"With him?" exclaimed Sid, and there was a new meaning in his tones. "Who was the girl?"

"Her name was Madge Tyler," replied Tom slowly.

"Madge Tyler!" repeated Sid. "Why, her brother used to go here. He graduated two years ago. He was a crackajack first baseman. And so Madge Tyler is going with Langridge?" he questioned.

"Or he with her," said Tom dryly. "I don't see that it makes much difference. Why, hasn't he got a right to?"

"Oh, I s'pose if you put it that way, he has," went on Sid. "Only——" and he stopped abruptly.

"Only what?" asked Tom.

"Only—nothing. Say, here's a chance to buy me that seltzer lemonade. I think you ought to stand treat for Phil and me, Tom, seeing that if it hadn't been for us the game would have been lost and you wouldn't have met Miss Madge."

"I don't know that it has benefited me much," replied Tom.

"What do you mean, you old cart horse?" asked

Phil, thumping his friend on the back. "Seeing the game won or meeting the pretty girl? I believe you said she was pretty."

"I didn't say so, but she is—very. But I meant about meeting her. Langridge seems to have a mortgage in that direction, I fancy."

"He makes me sick!" exclaimed Phil. "He and the airs he gives himself. But come on in here," and he turned toward a drug store. "I'm like a lime kiln, I'm so warm. It's your treat, Tom."

"All right, I'm willing."

"Did Miss Madge ask you to call?" inquired Phil as the three were wending their way toward college again.

"Yes."

"You don't say so! Well, it seems to me that for a new acquaintance you rushed matters fairly well."

"I forgot to add," said Tom slowly, "that I knew her before—back in Northville where I live. She moved away from there some years ago and I didn't recognize her at first. But she knew me at once."

"Wow! You old coffee percolator!" shouted Sid. "Why didn't you dish that out to us first, instead of letting us think you made an impression simply by the aid of your manly figure? So you knew her of old. Ha! ha! Likewise ho! ho! I begin to smell a concealed rodent in the woodpile."

"You didn't give me a chance," was Tom's quiet answer, and then he fell to talking about the game until he and Sid got to their room. Later there were bonfires and fun galore in honor of the victory.

Coach Lighton gave the nine no rest. Early the next Monday afternoon, as soon as lessons were over, he had them out on the diamond playing against the scrub. Somewhat to the surprise of members of the second team as well as that of the 'varsity, Tom Parsons struck out an unusual number of players.

"You fellows will have to bat better than this," growled Langridge when practice was over and the 'varsity game had been saved merely by a fumble on the part of a scrub fielder. "This won't do."

"Physician, heal thyself," quoted Captain Woodhouse with a grim smile. "You struck out twice, Langridge."

"I know it, but batting isn't my best specialty and it is for some of you fellows."

"True enough," admitted Kindlings gravely, "and we must brace up a bit for the game next Saturday with Fairview."

"The captain is right, boys," added the coach. "You must do some hard hitting."

"Or else Tom Parsons mustn't pitch so well," said Phil Clinton in a low voice to Sid. "How about it?"

"That's right. He's improving wonderfully. Langridge will have to look to his pitching arm."

At that moment the wealthy youth passed by Phil and Sid. He heard what they said, and if they could have seen his face then they would have been somewhat puzzled at the look on it. But neither Tom nor any of his friends saw.

It was the next day after the scrub game that as Tom was alone in his room, "boning" away on Latin, a knock sounded on the door.

"Come!" he cried, and, much to his surprise, Langridge entered.

"You're becoming a regular greasy dig, aren't you?" he asked pleasantly.

"Well, I've got to do some studying, you know. That's what I came here for."

"Yes, I know and all that sort of thing, but if you're going in for athletics you can't pound away at your books too hard."

"Oh, I guess what pounding I do won't hurt me," and Tom laid aside the volume, the while wondering why Langridge had called on him. Tom distinctly was not in the rich youth's set.

"I hope not," and the other's manner was becoming more and more cordial. "But I say, Parsons, don't you want to help us get one in on the sophs?"

"Sure. You can always count on me. What is it this time?"

"Well, you know the little open pavilion down near the river?"

"The one near the boathouse?"

"That same."

"Sure I know it."

"Well, you know according to ancient and revered college tradition that is sacred to the sophomores. None other but members of the second-year class may go there. If one of us freshmen is caught there it means a ducking, to say the least."

"So I've heard."

"Well, Kerr and I were in there the other day, for we heard that the sophs were off on a little racket, and we didn't think we'd be disturbed. We had a couple of girls there and were having a little confab when along came Gladdus and Battersby, grabbed us before we knew it and chucked us into the H_2O, whence we floundered like drowned rats."

"Yes, I heard about it."

"So did the whole college, I guess. Now Kerr and I feel that not only have we been insulted, but that the whole freshman class has."

"I agree to that."

"And will you help us to get even?"

"Sure. What you going to do?"

"You'll see later. What I need now is a coil of wire. I want to know if you'll get it for me."

"Certainly, but why can't you get it for yourself?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, I've got about all the marks I can stand this term, and merely because I happened to play an innocent trick in class today I'm forbidden to leave the college grounds for a week. Just when I want to go to town, too. So I've got to get some one else to get the wire for me, and I thought you would. I'll pay for it, of course."

"Sure I'll get it," agreed Tom, not stopping to think that Kerr, the special chum of Langridge, might have acted for his friend. "What kind do you want?"

"I'll tell you. Here's the money," and Langridge handed over a bill, also giving Tom a memorandum of the kind of wire wanted and where to get it in Haddonfield.

"And one more thing," the other youth added as he prepared to take his leave.

"What's that?"

"Don't, for the life of you, tell a soul that you got the wire for me. I want it kept a dead secret. The trick will be all the better then. Will you promise?"

"I will."

"On your honor as a freshman of Randall College?"

Tom wondered at the other's insistence.

"Of course I will. Shall I swear?" and Tom laughed.

"No, your word is enough," spoke Langridge significantly. "Have the wire by to-night, and we'll teach the sophs a lesson they won't soon forget."

CHAPTER XI

AN ELECTRIC SHOCK

LATE that same afternoon Tom, having gone to town alone, that he might accomplish his mission unobserved, came back with a coil of telegraph wire concealed under his sweater at his waist. He smuggled it to Langridge's room without being seen.

"That's the stuff, old man," cried Langridge heartily, but there was an air of patronizing superiority in his manner that Tom did not like. Still, he reasoned, the other could not rid himself of an inborn habit so easily, and it really seemed, in spite of the fact that Tom might be regarded as a rival of Langridge, that the latter was doing his best to be friendly.

"I s'pose it wouldn't do to ask what's up, would it?" inquired Tom as he was about to leave.

"Hardly," replied Langridge with what he meant to be a genial smile. "It might get out, you know. But you can be in at the death, so to speak. The whole freshman class will assemble at the

boathouse about nine. There'll be a full moon and we can have a good view of the sophs' pavilion."

"Are they going to be there?"

"I hope so. In fact I'm counting on it. This is the night of their annual moonlight song festival. They gather in and about the pavilion and make the night hideous with snatches of melody. They're rotten singers—the sophs this year—but that is neither here nor there. The point is that they'll be there, and it's up to us freshmen to give 'em a little surprise party."

"I suppose you're going to arrange the wire so they can't get into the pavilion without cutting it," suggested Tom, "or else put it across the path to trip them up."

"Er—yes—something like that," replied Langridge hastily. "Oh, by the way, have you a knife? I lost mine out rowing the other day. I'll give it back to you to-morrow."

Tom passed over his knife, a good-sized one, with his name engraved on the handle. His father had given it to him.

"Don't lose it," he cautioned. "I think a great deal of it."

"I'll not," promised Langridge. "Now don't forget to be on hand."

"I'll be there to see the fun."

"And maybe you'll see more than you bargain

for," whispered Langridge as Tom went out. There was a curious look on the face of the 'varsity pitcher.

One by one, by twos and threes or in small groups, silent figures stole away from dormitories that night and gathered about the pavilion or the boathouse, which was not far from it. To the first place went the sophomores, bent on having their annual frolic of song. To the second rendezvous traveled the freshmen, but they went more silently, for they did not want their natural enemies to learn of their presence.

The sophomores, however, were on their guard. From time immemorial it had been the custom for the first-year class to endeavor to break up the song fest of their predecessors, and it was the function of the first years to do this in as novel a manner as possible.

Tradition had it that various methods had been used, such as setting fire to the pavilion, digging pits in the paths that led to it and covering the holes with leaves and grass, laying a line of hose to the place, so that at an opportune moment the singers would be drenched and routed. The latter was a favorite plan and most successful.

But to-night a more strict guard than usual had been kept over the battle-scarred pavilion. All that day a committee had been on the watch so

that it was thought impossible that any hose could be used or any pits dug.

Now the sophomores were beginning to gather in and around the small shelter. They were jubilant, for they began to think they had outwitted their never-ceasing enemies.

Meanwhile the freshmen were not idle. In large numbers they had quietly gathered at the boathouse, in the dark shadows of which they remained in hiding, waiting for the opening of the singing and the consequent breaking up of the sophomore body.

"What's the game?" asked Sid of Tom as those two and Phil Clinton made their way to the rendezvous. "Water pipes, fire or something brand new?"

"You can search me," was Tom's non-committal answer. "I hope it's something new. There doesn't seem to be any provisions for a bonfire and none of us swiped the fire hose."

"Langridge and his committee have it in charge," said Phil. "There's some secrecy about it, and very properly, too. Last year, I understand, it leaked out and the fun was spoiled."

Tom did not reply, but he wondered what use Langridge was going to make of the wire.

"They ought to start soon now," whispered Phil. "There's a good crowd of them there."

"Yes, and they've got scouts out all around," added Sid as he and his chums saw a number of

shadowy figures patroling the stretch around the pavilion. "They're not going to be caught unawares."

"I don't see how we're going to break 'em up," remarked Phil.

"You wait and you'll see," exclaimed Langridge, who was moving about among the freshmen. "Say, Ed, you'd better go now and light the fuse."

"Is it an explosion?" asked Sid eagerly.

"Better be careful," cautioned Phil.

Tom's heart was thumping. He began to see the use to which the wire might be put, and he was afraid lest he had taken part in some dangerous prank. If Langridge had planned to explode a mine under the pavilion, some one might be injured.

"There'll be no explosion, only an explosion of wrath pretty soon," replied Langridge. "Go ahead, Kerr. Let 'em sing one song and they'll think we've called it off. Then let it go."

Kerr hurried off, keeping in the shadows. No sooner had he started than a movement was noticeable among the sophomores, groups of whom could easily be seen now, as the moon was well up.

Then, on the stillness of the night, there broke a song. It was an old melody, sacred to Randall, and, in spite of being rendered by hilarious students, it was well done.

"That's not half bad," commented Phil.

"They've got some good members for the glee club there."

"It's punk!" sneered Langridge. "Wait until we have a song fest. We'll make them feel sick!"

The melody continued, and coming as it did from the distance, while all about was the wondrous beauty of the moon, the effect produced on Tom Parsons was one of distinct pleasure. It was like being at some play.

"What a pity," he thought, "to spoil it all! What brutes we college fellows are—sometimes. I like to listen to that."

The song was softer now, and then it broke forth into a full chorus, well rendered.

"It's a shame to break it up," reasoned Tom. Then a class feeling overcame him. After all, the sophomores were their traditional enemies, and college tradition demanded that they disperse the gathering.

"Kerr ought to be there now," whispered Langridge. "The fuse will burn for two minutes."

"Fuse—fuse," repeated Phil. "It *must* be an explosion. You want to be careful, Langridge."

"Oh, I know what I'm doing," was the answer. "But mind now, no squealing, whatever happens."

"You needn't say that," was Phil's quick retort. "We're Randall College freshmen," as if that was all that was necessary.

Kerr glided in from somewhere.

"Well?" asked Langridge.

"It's all right."

The sophomores had started another song. They were about through the second verse when there came a series of sudden yells from the pavilion. There were cries of pain, and Langridge, in the midst of the freshmen, called out:

"That's it! That's the stuff! Rah! rah! sophs! This time we break you up. Cheer, boys, cheer!"

The freshmen set up an exultant cry as it became evident that, in some way, the gleeful singing of the second-year lads had been stopped. There was an excited movement in the pavilion, yet the waiting freshmen could not see that anything had taken place.

Then came a cry—two exclamations—louder and more anguished than any that had preceded. There was a yell—a protesting yell—and then some one in the pavilion shouted:

"Cut it, fellows! The hand railing is charged with electricity!"

"Three cheers for the freshmen!" called Langridge, and the response came spontaneously, for his mates knew that they had triumphed over the sophomores.

Suddenly above the confused cheering and shouting there came another cry.

"Help me, fellows! Oh, help—help!" screamed some one inside the pavilion.

There was a confused movement among the singers. Something seemed to have happened—something serious. The freshmen stopped their cheering and crowded up. A big sophomore broke through the throng and dashed toward the college.

"What's the matter?" called Tom, and he had an uneasy feeling as he asked the question.

"Matter? It's you confounded freshmen, that's what's the matter! Gladdus and Battersby have been knocked unconscious."

"Unconscious?"

"Yes, by a powerful current of electricity. Get out of my way, fresh, or I'll knock you down! I'm going for a doctor. Some of you had better notify the proctor," he added to a few of his classmates who followed him on the run. "This is serious business."

"Come on, fellows," advised Langridge. "It's all right. We broke up the pavilion meeting all right."

"But maybe some one is seriously hurt," said Sid.

"Nonsense, it was only a current from the incandescent light lamps. It couldn't hurt them. Come on, take a sneak away from here. We've had our fun. And mind, everybody keep his mouth shut," and Langridge disappeared in the shadows of the trees, while ahead of him panted several sophomores on their way to summon a physician.

CHAPTER XII

TOM DOESN'T TELL

TOM and Sid hurried along in the midst of the freshmen, Phil Clinton trailing after them. The three found themselves in a little group, comparatively alone.

"Maybe we'd better do something," proposed Tom.

"No, best not to interfere," advised Sid. "Let them manage it."

"But if Gladdus and Battersby are hurt——"

"Come on," urged Phil. "We're likely to be caught any minute. Proc. Zane will be out after all that racket. Let's get to our rooms and lay low."

When Tom and Sid were in their apartment the scrub pitcher turned to his chum and asked:

"Did you know what was in the wind to-night, Sid?"

"No. I left it all to Langridge and Kerr. But I guess it's all right. Why?"

"Oh, nothing much. But if some one is hurt——"

"Nonsense, don't worry. Why, that's nothing to what other classes have done. I remember hearing a story of how——"

But Sid's yarn was interrupted by a tap at the door, and Ford Fenton slid in. There was rather a frightened look on his face.

"What's up, Fenton?" asked Sid.

"I don't know, but something is. They've carried Gladdus and Battersby into the infirmary, and there's a lot of scurrying about. They've sent for a doctor from town, and Moses and Proc. Zane have gone down to the pavilion."

"What for?" asked Tom.

"Blessed if I know. Say, but we broke up their singing all right, didn't we? It was great. My uncle says——"

"Shut up!" cried Tom, and there was such unusual irritability in his tone that the other two looked at him in surprise. He saw it and went on: "I—I didn't exactly mean that, Fenton, old chap, but I'm—I'm all upset."

"For cats' sake, what about?" demanded Sid. "You don't mean to say you're worried because our class knocked out a couple of greasy old sophs?"

"Well, I—er——"

There came another interruption, and a lad entered.

"Here's the Snail," exclaimed Sid as Sam Looper crawled in and closed the door softly behind him.

"He can find out what's up. How about it, Snail—any news?"

Sam blinked his eyes as if the light hurt him.

"I've been around—around," he said slowly, waving his hand to take in the whole compass of the college and grounds. "I saw 'em carry the two sophs away. They're badly burned and shocked. Langridge is a fool!" They had seldom seen the Snail so excited. "He went and strung a wire from the electric light circuit to the iron hand rail around the pavilion. Only he made a mistake in the connections and got the wires crossed with the powerful arc circuit. The incandescent is only a hundred and ten volts, while the arc is twenty-four hundred. Some difference. Only that they got a small part of it, they'd be dead instead of merely badly shocked."

Tom Parsons half uttered an exclamation.

"What's the matter?" asked Sid quickly.

"Oh, nothing. Go on, Snail."

"That's about all," came from Sam. "Pitchfork—he's a sort of doctor, you know—he's working over 'em now. I guess they'll be all right."

Tom started to leave the room.

"Where you going?" inquired Sid.

"Out. I—I must see what's happened!"

"You stay here!" ordered Sid, half fiercely. "You'll be nabbed in a minute. Proc. Zane has his scouts out, waiting to corral everybody. Here,

Snail, you go. You know how to keep out of sight."

"Sure," agreed Sam, who liked nothing better than to prowl around in the dark. "Wait here and I'll sneak back."

"Be careful," cautioned Ford.

The Snail slowly winked his half-shut eyes, but did not speak. Then he closed the door softly and they heard him tiptoeing down the corridor.

"The Snail will find out," almost whispered Sid. Somehow they all appeared to be under a strain. Tom was pacing back and forth in the room. Ford stood with his back to the mantel, his hands clasped behind him. Sid tried to look at a book, but he took no sense of the words. Finally, with an exclamation, he threw it on the sofa. Ford quietly left the room and a little later Phil Clinton came in. Sid and Tom saw that he had heard all.

Tom ceased his nervous walk and went over to the sofa. He sat down on it, the ancient piece of furniture creaking with his weight. But he was not there half a minute before he arose and began pacing up and down again. Then he tried an easy chair, whence there floated up a little cloud of dust from the old cushions. There was silence in the apartment, broken only by the ticking of a fussy little alarm clock. It seemed to double up on the number of seconds allotted to a minute. The three could hear each other's breathing. They were

under some strain, though, for the life of them, neither Sid nor Phil could tell what it was.

"Why doesn't some one say something?" asked Phil at length, and it was as if some one had broken the silence in a church.

Sid picked up the book he had cast aside. Then he threw it down again, for there sounded the noise of a person coming along the corridor. The Snail came in.

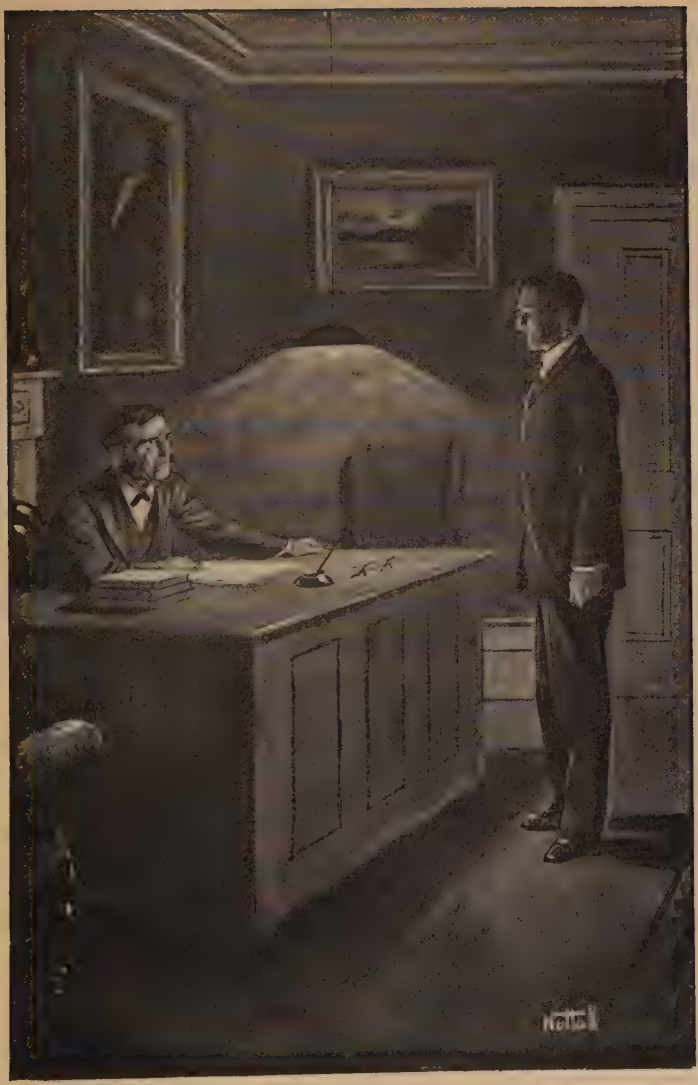
"Well?" gasped Tom, and it was as if he had shouted it, though he spoke in a low, tense voice.

"They're in a bad way," said the Snail slowly, "but there's a chance to pull them through. There's going to be an investigation, I heard. Langridge is likely to——"

There came a knock on the door. The lads started guiltily. Phil, being nearest the portal, opened it, though if it was one of the proctor's "scouts," as was likely, he would be "up" for breaking one of the college rules about being in another room after the prescribed hours. It was a "scout," Mr. Snell, a sort of upper janitor.

"Mr. Parsons," said the scout deferentially—and he took no notice of the presence of the Snail or Phil, for which they were duly grateful—"Mr. Parsons, the proctor would like to see you in his office."

"Now?" asked Tom, and his heart began to beat double strokes.



"NO, I CANNOT TELL, MR. ZANE"—*Page* 118

"Now, yes, sir."

Without a look at his chums Tom went out and to the office. He was afraid lest he might betray the secret he feared would be disclosed at any moment—the secret of the coil of wire.

"Mr. Parsons," began Proctor Zane slowly when the door had closed behind Tom, "there has been a serious accident to-night."

Tom bowed. He could not trust his voice.

"Two students were badly hurt and the results may be lasting. They are only just now out of danger."

Once more Tom bowed. He could not speak. The beating of his heart was choking him.

"As a rule," went on the proctor judicially, "I take no notice of the—er—the affairs between the different classes or student bodies. But this time I am obliged to. Dr. Churchill and myself have made an examination of the pavilion where this outrage occurred. We discovered the wires running from the electric light circuit to the hand rail. We discovered where a spring connection had been made, so that, by the burning away of a fuse, the parts of the spring closed, the wires came in contact and the current filled the hand rail. We also discovered something else."

He paused, and Tom, for the first time, looked the proctor full in the face. Mr. Zane held out a small object.

"This knife was found near where the wires were fastened to the railing," he said. "It has your name on it. Is it yours?"

"Yes, sir," replied Tom.

"You took part in this affair?"

"I am a freshman."

"That is answer enough. Did you attach the wires?"

"No, and I had nothing to do with that part of it."

"Your knife would seem to indicate that you had."

No answer from Tom.

"Did you use your knife to attach the wires?"

"No, sir."

"Do you know who did?"

"I think I do."

"Will you tell?"

Tom could almost hear his heart beating. There was a singing in his ears. Then he answered:

"No. I cannot tell, Mr. Zane. I—I——"

"That will do," said the proctor gravely. "I did not expect you would tell."

Tom turned and made his way from the room. There was a mist before his eyes. There came back to him the promise he had made to Langridge. On his honor as a freshman he had agreed not to give information. When he gave the promise he

had not known how serious it would be. But, nevertheless, it was a promise.

Tom stumbled into his room. The Snail and Phil were gone. Sid sat with the light turned low. He jumped up as his chum came in.

"Tom," he cried, "what's the matter?"

"Nothing," was the answer in a dull, spiritless tone. Tom threw himself into a chair. The fussy little clock ticked away. Half an hour passed and not a word was spoken.

"You'd better go to bed, old man," said Sid gently. "It'll be all right to-morrow."

Without a word Tom began to undress. The light was turned out. Sid was dozing off when he heard his chum tossing restlessly on his bed.

"Tom," he called through the darkness, "can I help you?"

"No," came the answer, and then Tom lay quiet. But he did not sleep.

CHAPTER XIII

A GIRL AND A GAME

THERE was a more complete investigation the next day. The report was also circulated that the two sophomores were not so badly injured as had at first been feared. But there was something in the air which showed that stringent measures were likely to be taken by the faculty.

Dr. Churchill was ten minutes late in opening chapel that morning, and there was much stately moving to and fro on the part of the instructors. On the face of Professor Emerson Tines there was a look of satisfaction, as if he was glad that some one had gotten into trouble.

"Look at Pitchfork!" said Sid to Tom, but Tom's face had not lost its anxious look.

"For Heaven's sake, cheer up!" whispered Phil Clinton. "They'll think you did the whole business if they see your face, Tom."

Dr. Churchill made an unusual prayer that morning. Though he did not directly refer to the happening of the previous night, it was in his petition, and many a freshman, impressed by the sol-

emn words, then and there resolved to abjure in the future unseemly pranks and to become a "grind."

"The freshman class will remain after chapel this morning," announced the venerable head of Randall, and as the other classes filed out there were commiserating looks cast at the unlucky first-years by the juniors and seniors and vindictive glances bestowed by the sophomores.

The examination was a long and searching one. Tom was questioned at length, but all he would admit was that he took part in the affair, though he stated that he had had nothing to do with fixing the wires. Nor did he tell of having brought the coil to Langridge. His knife was damaging evidence against him, and he was content to let it stand as such. Kerr manfully admitted lighting the fuse which sprung the wires together and sent the current sizzling into the hand rail, but he would go no further nor tell who had strung the conductors.

The faculty dismissed the class and the instructors went into executive session.

"Maybe we'll all be in for it," predicted Phil as the lads strolled off to their classrooms. "They may suspend us all for a week."

"I don't believe they'd do that," was Sid's opinion. "They may forbid any of us taking part in athletics, though."

"Yes, they might do that," added Fenton. "My uncle says——"

The boys all stopped and looked at him. No one spoke a word. Fenton squirmed under their unflinching gaze.

"Well—well," he began hesitatingly, "he ought to know, for he was a coach here——"

"Yes, and you're a regular trolley car, with an automatic gong that rings up the same thing every time," exclaimed Langridge. "They wouldn't dare keep us out of athletics for such a little joke as that. Why, the whole student body would be up in arms. The ball team would go to pieces, and we'd lose the championship. They wouldn't dare."

"Glad you think so," remarked Holly Cross calmly. "But I can see us giving a good imitation of a lot of fellows in trouble. Maybe we—that is, whoever strung those wires, for I don't know who it was—maybe we went a little too far. If I'd have known what was up, I'd have made a kick."

"Oh, is that so?" sneered Langridge. But he did not admit his part in the prank and he let Tom suffer for him, for that afternoon it was announced that Tom was to be suspended for two weeks and Kerr for three. Every other member of the freshman class was barred from leaving the college grounds for a week.

There arose a mighty protest over this, for there was a game scheduled with Fairview Institute at

the end of the week, and if the class was kept within bounds it meant that many of the nine could not play and that all the freshmen would be barred from witnessing the second of the championship struggles, as the contest was to take place at Fairview.

Then the faculty reconsidered the matter, being "almost human," as Phil said, and, with the possible exception of Professor Tines, having once been young and fond of sport themselves. They made a new ruling: That the class was to keep within bounds until the day of the game, when all would be allowed to attend save Tom and Kerr. In their case no exception would be made.

There was more objecting, but the ruling stood. It meant that Tom could not pitch on the scrub and that Kerr could not catch on the 'varsity, whereat there was much anguish of soul, for the Fairview team was a hard proposition, and it would take the best that was in the Randall lads to beat them. But there was no help for it.

Nor did Tom reproach Langridge for having gotten him into the trouble. Tom had hoped that his rival would confess and shoulder the blame, in which case, merely having brought the wire on a supposition that it was to be used for a comparatively harmless prank, Tom's case would not have been nearly so bad. But Langridge said nothing. Sid heard somehow of the 'varsity pitcher's part in

the trick. Then Tom's chum expressed the belief that Langridge had deliberately acted so as to get Tom into trouble because the rich lad had feared the newcomer might supplant him as pitcher.

But Tom would not hear of this. He took his suspension grimly, silently, and though barred from class, he kept up his studies; nor did he neglect his practice of throwing curves, Kerr gladly agreeing to catch for him, for the two were outcasts from the diamond, Tom not even being allowed to play on the scrub.

"But two weeks and three weeks can't last forever," declared Kerr, "though I sure would like to see the Fairview game."

Saturday came and with it a feeling of apprehension on the part of the Randall students, for various reports had come to them of the prowess of their rivals. The team made ready to depart for Fairview Institute. They were to go by rail to the college that was fifteen miles away. Tom and Kerr, about the only ones in the athletic set who remained at Randall, looked wistfully at their departing comrades.

And then, so suddenly that it seemed like a miracle, their sorrow was turned to joy, for the proctor sought them out on the campus, where the team was being cheered previous to departure, and announced in the case of the two suspended students that they might go to the game, but take no

part, even in an emergency. They gladly accepted the terms. Dr. Churchill's heart had softened at the last moment.

"Girls, girls, girls!" exclaimed Tom as he walked out on the field with Sid and Phil and saw the grandstand at Fairview massed with gay femininity. "And all pretty too!"

"Of course," agreed Sid. "What did I tell you? But what interests me more is the other team. Jove! but they are quick," for the Fairview students were batting and catching in a manner to provoke admiration.

There were shrill cries of encouragement from the girls and more hoarse shouts from the male students, for at Fairview the sexes were about evenly divided, both boys and girls taking equal interest in sports.

Coach Lighton shook his head dubiously as he saw the Randall boys stream out on the diamond for practice.

"I hope Cross will appreciate the seriousness of the matter," he said. "He can't begin to touch Kerr at catching, yet he's the best one we can put in."

"Yes," agreed Kindlings. "But maybe we'll make out. I hope so."

Kerr was as nervous as a girl at not being able to play. He paced up and down the coaching lines until Kindlings, fearing he would disconcert the

team, sent him to the grandstand, where Tom had already gone.

Well, that game with Fairview is ancient history now. Sufficient to say that after a good beginning, when they gathered three runs the first inning and held their opponents down to a goose egg, principally through the pitching of Langridge, the Randall lads went to pieces and the Fairviews ran away with them. Langridge was finally fairly batted out of the box and the final score was 16 to 4 in favor of the co-educational institution.

It was a sorely disappointed nine that filed off the diamond, nor could the generous cheers of the victors apply any balm to the wounds.

"Such pitching!" grumbled Phil as he was in the dressing-room. "That lost us the game as much as anything else. Langridge didn't seem to be in form."

The pitcher overheard him.

"I say, Clinton," he called out sneeringly, "you mind your own affairs. I train as good as you, and I didn't miss a fly that came right into my hands," for Phil had thus offended, letting in a run.

"I've seen you pitch better," spoke Sid quietly, for he and several others were "sore" at Langridge, who plainly enough had not been in his usual good form.

"Well, maybe. I can't be on edge all the while," and the pitcher laughed nervously.

Tom, in the grandstand, was making his way down amid a bevy of pretty girls and wishing he had some one who would introduce him to them when he heard a voice call his name. He turned quickly and saw Madge Tyler in a bewilderingly pretty dress, her hair framing her face in a most bewitching manner, while her eyes were bright with the joy of youth and the fire thereof.

"Too bad, wasn't it?" she asked sympathetically, holding out her hand to Tom. "I was so sorry for Mr. Langridge!"

"Why Langridge?" asked Tom quickly.

"Oh, well, because the pitcher seems to have to work so hard, and then to be defeated——"

"Yes, it was unpleasant—the defeat," agreed Tom. "But are you going out?"

"Yes, I came over with friends to see the game, but I seem to have missed them in the crush."

"Then let me be your escort back to Haddonfield?" asked Tom. "I'm rather by my lonesome, too."

"Oh, thank you. I dare say——"

She paused and looked over the moving mass of students, boys and girls who were laughing happily or walking away dejectedly according to the colors they wore. Tom followed her gaze. He saw Langridge approaching and he knew that Miss Tyler had seen him also.

"There's Mr. Langridge!" she exclaimed. "I

wonder how he feels? He promised to meet me after the game."

Tom took a sudden resolve. He did not stop to think that it might be a foolish one. He was actuated solely by what he argued to himself was a platonic interest in the pretty girl at his side. He had known her in childhood, he knew her people, and they were old friends of his folks. Of late Tom had heard certain rumors about Langridge, nothing serious as rumors about college students go, but enough to make Tom glad that, in the case of his sisters, Langridge could not get to know them. It was therefore with somewhat the same feeling that he might have warned his sisters that he spoke to Miss Tyler.

"You and Mr. Langridge are quite friendly," he said in what he intended to be a light tone.

"Oh, yes," came the frank answer. "I like him immensely. I like all college boys—when they're nice," she finished with a little laugh.

Tom's face was grave, and she saw it. With a girl's intuition she felt that there was something in the air, and, girl-like, she wanted to know what it was.

"Shouldn't I like him?" she demanded with an arch look.

"Well—er—that is—no, Miss Madge!" burst out Tom, speaking more loudly than he had in-

"REPEAT WHAT YOU WERE JUST SAYING TO MISS TYLER ABOUT ME"—
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tended to. "You won't mind me speaking about it, for I've known you so many years."

"Oh, I'm not so ancient as all that!" exclaimed the girl rather pertly.

"No," admitted Tom, and he felt that he was getting into deep water and beyond his depth. But he would not retreat and floundered on: "No, but I—I know your folks wouldn't like you to go with Langridge—that is, too much, you know. He does not bear a very good——"

There was a hand on Tom's shoulder, and he felt himself wheeled suddenly around, to be confronted by Langridge. The pitcher had brushed his uniform and looked particularly handsome in a well-fitting suit, while there was a healthy glow to his face.

"Perhaps you'd better repeat over again, Parsons," he said somewhat sternly, "what you were just saying to Miss Tyler about me. I didn't catch it all!"

"I—er—I——" Tom was choking, and the girl bravely came to his relief.

"We were just talking about you," she admitted with a nervous little laugh. "I was saying how disheartening it must be to pitch through a hard game and then lose it. And Tom—I mean Mr. Parsons, but I always call him Tom, for I've known him so long—he was just saying—er—he was just saying that you were rather—well, rather a flirt. I believe

that was it, wasn't it, Tom?" and she looked quickly at him, but there was meaning in her glance.

Langridge kept his hand on Tom's shoulder and the two looked each other straight in the face unflinchingly. Miss Tyler lost some of her blushes and her cheeks began to pale. Then Tom spoke quietly.

"If you wish to know exactly what I said," was his quiet but tense answer, "I will tell you—later," and he swung on his heel and started down the grandstand steps.

For an instant Langridge stared after him. Then, with a little laugh, he turned to Miss Tyler.

"Poor Parsons is sore because he's been suspended," he said. "He can't even pitch on the scrub. But how pretty you're looking to-day, Miss Madge."

"Miss Tyler, please," she corrected him.

"Mayn't I even call you Miss Madge after I've been defeated in the game?" he pleaded, and he looked at her boldly. "It would be—er—well, sort of soothing to me."

"Would it?" and she laughed lightly.

"It surely would," and he bent closer toward her.

"Well, then, you may—but only on occasions of defeat."

"Then I'm going to lose every game," he added

promptly as he turned at her side and walked down the steps.

Tom Parsons, strolling alone over the now vacant diamond, saw them together, and there was a strange feeling in his heart.

CHAPTER XIV

TOM'S CURVES

THERE was lively practice of the Randall nine the following week, and Coach Lighton said some things that hurt, but they were needed. Nor was Langridge spared, though he affected not to mind the sharp admonition that he must pitch more consistently.

The nine played a game Saturday with an outside team, more for practice than anything else, and won it "hands down," as Holly Cross said. But, after all, it was not much credit to the 'varsity, for their opponents were not as good as the college scrub. Holly caught, the period of Kerr's suspension not being up yet.

Tom kept at his practice, but he was more than glad when he could resume his class work again and take his place on the second nine.

"Now we'll tackle work together," said the coach one afternoon to Tom, for Mr. Lighton had not been allowed to give him directions during the suspension weeks. "I hope you haven't gone stale, Parsons."

"I hope not. Kerr and I have been sort of practicing together."

"That's good. I hope, before the season is over, that you and he will go into a regular game together. If not, you'll have your 'innings' next year, if you progress as you have been doing."

Tom was glad of the praise, but he would have been more glad of a chance to get on the 'varsity. Still he determined to do his best on the scrub, but it was hard and rather thankless work.

Mr. Lighton put him through a hard course of "sprouts" that afternoon. With some members of the scrub to bat against him, Tom sent in swift and puzzling balls, for all the while his ability to curve was increasing and his control was improving. That afternoon he struck out six men in succession, retiring them without having given any one of them more than two balls. It was very good work, and the fact that the men were not extraordinary good hitters did not detract from it.

"That's fine!" cried Mr. Lighton enthusiastically. "I'm going to——" But what he was going to do he did not say.

"They ought to make you substitute pitcher on the 'varsity team," was the opinion of Dutch Housenlager when the practice was over. "Rod Evert isn't one-two-six with you, and he doesn't do any practicing to speak of."

"Maybe he feels that he doesn't have to, for

Langridge seems to make good nearly every time," spoke Tom.

"Aw, rats! All that keeps Langridge manager is his money. He certainly runs the financial end of the game to perfection. And if he wasn't manager he wouldn't be pitcher. But the fellows know he takes a lot of responsibility from them, and they're just easy enough to let things slide. Some day we'll be up against it. Langridge will be knocked out of the box, Evert won't be in form, and we'll lose the game."

"Unless they call on 'yours truly,' " interjected Tom with a laugh.

"Exactly," agreed Dutch seriously. "That's my point. I wish they'd name you for sub. I'm going to ask——"

"No, no!" expostulated Tom quickly. "If I can't get there on my own merits, I don't want it. No favors, please. I can wait."

"Well, just as you say, of course. But say, there's the Grasshopper. Watch me make him jump."

He pointed to Pete Backus, a tall student, who seemed to be measuring off a certain distance on a grassy stretch down near the river.

"Looks as if he was going to jump without you making him," observed Tom.

"Oh, he's always jumping. He thinks he's great at it. Wants to make the track team, but he

can't seem to do it. He'll do his distance easily one day and fall down the next. You can't depend on him. But I'll make him jump now. Sneak down behind those bushes."

Tom followed Dutch softly. There were no other students about and they managed to gain the screen of the bushes unobserved by the Grasshopper, who was intent on measuring distances with a pocket tape. The two conspirators could see where he had been practicing the broad jump.

The Grasshopper stood close to a clump of elder bushes, with his back to them. He was preparing for another test. Dutch Housenlager, who was not happy unless he was engaged in some joke or horse play, silently cut a long pole and fastened to it a big pin, which he extracted from some part of his garments. Then, seeing a good opening that gave access to a tender part of the rear elevation of the Grasshopper's legs, he thrust with no gentle hand just as poor Pete was about to throw himself forward in a standing broad jump.

"Wow!" cried the punctured one.

But it was so sudden that he did not have time to stop his leap, which he was on the verge of making, and he sprang through the air like an animated jumping-jack.

"Fine! fine!" cried Dutch, rising up from his place of concealment. "That's the time you beat your own record, Grasshopper."

Pete turned. He looked over the space he had covered. His heels had come down at least a foot beyond where he had previously landed. The look of anger on his face, as he felt of his pricked leg, turned to one of satisfaction.

"By Jove! I believe you're right," he exclaimed. "I have done better by—let's see'—and he measured it—"by fourteen inches."

"I told you so," called Dutch, still laughing. "Next time you want to jump, just let me get in the bushes behind you. It'll be good for an extra foot every time."

"Um," murmured the Grasshopper, still rubbing his leg reflectively. "It was an awful jab though, Dutch."

"What of it? Look at your distance," and once more Pete looked happy as he again measured the space he had covered.

"Poor old Grasshopper," commented Dutch as he and Tom strolled along the campus, leaving the jumper still at his practice. "Poor old Grasshopper! He'll never make the track team."

The next few days saw Tom putting in all his spare time practicing curves under the watchful eye of Mr. Lighton. The 'varsity played with the scrub and narrowly escaped a good drubbing. Langridge seemed to be asleep part of the time and issued a number of walking papers. It was after the contest, which the regulars had pulled

out of the fire with rather scorched fingers, that the coach called Captain Woodhouse and Langridge to him.

"I rather think we'd better make a little shift," he said.

"In what way?" asked Langridge quickly.

"Well, I think we ought to name Parsons as substitute pitcher on the 'varsity. He's been doing excellent work, fully equal to yours, Langridge. Of course he's a little uncertain yet, but one big game would take that out of him. I'd like to see him pitch at least part of the game against Boxer next week."

"Does that mean you're dissatisfied with me?" asked Langridge quickly, and his face flushed.

"Not necessarily. But I think it rather risky not to provide better than we have for a substitute pitcher. Evert is available, of course, but as he is a junior his studies are such that he can't devote the necessary time to practice. Parsons ought to be named."

"Do you demand that in your official capacity as coach, Mr. Lighton?" asked Kindlings. "Because if you do, I'll agree to it at once."

"No, I merely make that suggestion to you."

The captain looked at the manager. Langridge stood with a supercilious smile on his face.

"I presume I shall have something to say as manager," he remarked.

"Certainly," admitted the coach gravely.

"Then I say Parsons shan't act as substitute pitcher. I'm good for the season, and I'm going to play it out. I see his game. He wants to oust me and he's taken this means of doing it. He got you to plead for him, Mr. Lighton. I'll not stand for it."

"You're entirely mistaken, Langridge," said the coach, with the least suspicion of annoyance in his even voice. "It is my own idea. Parsons does not even know that I have spoken to you; in fact, I believe that he would not allow me to."

Langridge was sneering now.

"I guess he would," he said.

"Then you, as manager, don't want Parsons as substitute pitcher?" asked the coach.

"No!" snapped Langridge.

"Of course if you order it, Mr. Lighton," began honest Kindlings with an uneasy look at the coach —"of course if you make a point of it——"

"No, I don't," and Mr. Lighton spoke quietly. "That was not my intention—just yet. Parsons will remain on the scrub then, at least for the present. Later I may—er—I may make a point of it," and he turned and walked away.

CHAPTER XV

A SOPHOMORE TRICK

WHILE knowing nothing of the efforts Coach Lighton was making in his behalf, Tom continued hard practice at his pitching. Every day he made some improvement until his friends on the scrub regarded him as a marvel. But, as if some mysterious whisper had come to Langridge, the latter also showed improvement. He spent more time in practice and at one game, when it looked as if the scrub would beat the 'varsity, chiefly due to Tom's fine pitching, Langridge saved the day by brilliant work in the box. The coach was pleased at this and Tom could not help feeling that his chances were farther away than ever.

There were many other phases of college life, aside from baseball, that appealed to Tom. He liked his studies and he gave them more attention than perhaps any other lad of the sporting set. He was not a "greasy dig," by which was meant a student who burned midnight oil over his books, but he stood well in his classes, for learning came naturally to him.

Not so, however, to his roommate. Poor Sid had to "bone" away rather hard to get along, and, as he was required to put in a certain amount of time on the diamond, his lessons sometimes suffered. He was warned one day by Professor Tines, in the Latin class, that if he did not show more improvement he would be conditioned and not allowed to play on the team.

"And that mustn't happen," declared Captain Woodhouse. "Take a brace, Sid. Don't go throwing us down now. It's too late to break in another first baseman."

Sid promised, and, for a time, stood better in his class. In the meanwhile other sports went on at Randall College. The crew was out every day on the river and the 'varsity eight-oared shell, several doubles and some singles held impromptu races. A freshman eight was formed and Tom was asked to join, but he wisely refused, for he reasoned that he could not give enough time to it to become a member of a racing crew without sacrificing either baseball or his studies, and he would do neither.

"But you'll never make the 'varsity nine," argued Captain Bonsell, of the freshman crew. "Much better to train with us, for I'll promise you a place in the boat when it comes to the championship race. You'll never be the 'varsity pitcher."

For Bonsell had looked with envy on Tom's big muscles.

"Well, I'm not going to give up until the last game," declared Tom stoutly. "Maybe I'll get a chance at the tail end. Langridge can't last forever, though far be it from me to wish him any bad luck."

"I see," spoke Bonsell with a laugh, "the survival of the fittest. I wish you luck, old man."

So Tom practiced and practiced and practiced until on the scrub his name became one to conjure with. But Langridge remained in his place on the 'varsity and Evert was the substitute pitcher. Between Tom and Langridge there was more than ever a coldness. It was not due to the sneaking act of the rich lad in not absolving Tom from blame in the wire episode, but might more properly be ascribed to the incident connected with Miss Tyler, though neither youth was willing to admit this. In spite of himself, Tom found that he was entertaining a certain indescribable feeling toward the girl. Often, at night, he would recall her laughing, tantalizing face as she walked away with Langridge.

"Hang it all!" Tom would exclaim to his pillow. "He's not fit for her! She ought to know it. I practically told her, yet she went off with him, after all. Confound it all, I can't understand girls, anyhow."

But Tom might well have been comforted, for no one else does either, though many believe that they do.

But, though part of Tom's coldness toward Langridge was based on the latter's meanness about the wire and though probably the 'varsity pitcher kept aloof from Tom for the same reason, there was no disposition on Tom's part to complain or "squeal." As far as the faculty was concerned, Tom was guilty of the prank that had had so nearly a fatal ending. But he did not complain. He had given his word.

"Well, Tom, old man, going along?" asked Sid one day as he came in from a biology lecture and tossed his text-book under the bed, though he knew he would have to crawl for it afterward.

"Going along where?"

"The team's going to Dodville for a game with a big prep. school there. Not much as regards a game, but it will be fun. It's a nice trolley trip, and I hear all the subs are going."

"But I'm not a sub."

"Well, you're a scrub, and that's almost the same. Come along and root for us, anyhow, though I guess we'll wipe up the earth with the preps."

"I thought we had a game with Boxer to-morrow."

"We did, but they canceled it, as they have to

fill in a postponed game with Fairview, so we've shifted our schedule. Will you come?"

"Sure, if there's room."

"Of course there is. Langridge has hired two special trolleys. You know he's not going to play the regular 'varsity team. Only freshmen are to be allowed on it. It's more for practice than anything else."

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom. It was on the tip of his tongue to ask if Sid thought there might be a chance to do some pitching, but he thought better of it.

The Dodville Preparatory School had a good nine and a reputation of putting up a hard game, but Langridge was set on the idea of playing only freshmen against them, and thus it was decided. On the afternoon of the game the team, many supporters and the scrubs and substitutes boarded two trolleys for the trip to the grounds.

It was a jolly crowd, and the way was enlivened by songs and jokes. Tom was in the first car with Sid and some others of his particular chums. Langridge was also there, but he kept rather away from Tom.

Out on the platform with the motorman was an individual with a slouch hat pulled down over his eyes and his coat collar turned up.

"Who's that, a tramp?" asked Tom as he noticed the man.

"Looks like it," admitted Sid. "Begging a ride maybe on the strength of this being a special. Well, let him go. If you call attention to him, some of the fellows may make a row and create a rough house. Don't say anything."

Tom did not, but he noticed that the tramp appeared to be very friendly to the motorman and talked frequently with him. The electric line to Dodville ran through a stretch of country not thickly populated, and at one point it switched over another trolley road which ran to a distant, thriving village. The boys were so engrossed in their fun, laughing and joking that they paid little attention to matters outside, and the time passed quickly. Holly Cross was giving (by request) an imitation of a well-known vaudeville performer when Sid, who happened to look out of the window, exclaimed:

"Say, fellows, where, for the love of tripe, are we? This isn't the road to Dodville."

"Aw, what's eatin' you?" demanded Dutch Housenlager. "Could the trolley car go off by itself on a road alone? Answer me that!"

"I don't know what it could do, it's what it has done," retorted Sid. "I know this road. It goes to Fayetmore, which is next door to Squankum Center. Fellows, we're five miles from Dodville!"

"Get out!" cried Langridge, unwilling to believe it.

"Fact!" asserted Sid. "We're five miles out of our way, on the wrong road, and the game starts in less than an hour. They'll call it a forfeit on us and never stop twitting us about this."

"Ah, you must be wrong," declared Holly Cross. "Don't you s'pose the motorman knows the way? It isn't as if this was an auto."

Sid pulled open the front door. The tramp, who had been talking to the motorman, had gone.

"I say," began the first baseman, "is this the road to Dodville? Aren't you on the wrong line?"

"Why, sir, I don't rightly know," replied the motorman somewhat timidly.

"You don't know?" repeated Sid incredulously.

"No. I—I hope this is the right road."

"You hope so!" cried Langridge. "Well, I should say yes. Why don't you know?"

"Well, you see, I'm new on this section of the line. To-day is my first run. I took the turn back there where the gentleman told me to."

"What gentleman?"

"The one who was out here on the platform with me. He said he was your manager."

"Manager!" fairly yelled Langridge. "Why, I'm the manager of this team."

"Can't help it. That's what the gentleman said. He said he knew the road to Dodville, and when I got to the switch he told me to come this way."

"What was his name?" demanded Langridge,

who was beginning to "scent a rodent," as Holly Cross said.

"He gave me his card," went on the motorman, who had halted his car in the midst of a lonely stretch of woods.

"Let's see!" cried Sid.

The trolley man fumbled in his pocket for it. Tom looked back, but could not see the other special car. That had probably been some distance behind the first one and had doubtless gone the right road, the motorman not suspecting that his predecessor was not ahead of him.

Sid took the bit of pasteboard which the man held out to him. He looked at it and then uttered an exclamation.

"It's a trick!" he cried, "a soph trick! Listen to this, fellows. This is Fenmore's card, and he's written on it this message: 'This is only part of what we sophs owe you freshies for the pavilion game. There is more coming. Hope you have a nice picnic in the woods.' That fellow on the platform was Fenmore," went on Sid. "No wonder he kept his hat down."

"And here we are—part of the team—out here in the wilderness, five miles from the game, which starts in half an hour!" cried Langridge in disgust. "Say, those sophs got back at us all right. We're in a nice pickle!"

CHAPTER XVI

TOM MAKES A DISCOVERY

THERE was consternation among the freshmen and their supporters. With a divided team, part of it being so far away from the grounds that it was practically impossible to arrive on time, and on a wrong road at that, the situation was enough to discourage any nine.

"What made you let that fellow tell you where to go?" demanded Sid of the motorman.

"Well, he said he was your manager, and I believed him."

"Manager!" cried Holly Cross. "Yes, we need a manager. We need a nurse and a governess, that's what we need. To think that twenty of the brightest freshmen at Randall have been duped by one soph! Wow! I must have blood!" and he began to dance and howl like a stage Indian.

"Well," said Langridge disgustedly after a few minutes' thought, which period was occupied on the part of the others by the use of language more strong and rugged than polite, "the only thing to

do is to go back. Make the best time you can and see what we can do. Shift the car, motorman."

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"Because I got orders not to start back until half-past four. You see, this is a single-track road, and I might run into a car coming in the opposite direction. We've got to stay here until four-thirty."

This was worse than ever, and a howl went up. But suddenly Sid, who had been narrowly looking at the motorman, took a step toward him. He reached up, grabbed his beard and pulled it off.

"Hayden!" he exclaimed as there was revealed to view the features of one of the liveliest of the sophomore class. "By all the gods that on Olympus dwell, it's Hayden!"

"At your service, gentlemen," exclaimed Hayden with a mocking bow. "This is a little pleasure trip that Fenmore and I arranged for you. I hope you enjoy it," and with another mocking bow he slipped off the controller handle and leaped over the dashboard of the car.

"We hired the regular motorman to let us take his place," he went on. "I guess you don't play ball to-day," and he disappeared in the woods with a tantalizing laugh.

"Let's catch him!" cried Holly Cross.

"Sure! Let's scalp him and tie him to a tree," proposed Dutch Housenlager.

THE MAN ALLOWED THEM TO PILE IN—*Page* 150

"What's the use?" asked Sid. "He knows this part of the country like a book, for he's been hunting in it. Better let him go. He'll only laugh the more at us."

"But what are we to do?" demanded Langridge. "We don't want to lose the game." He was very vexed, for he knew it would reflect on him as manager.

"The only thing I see to do is to walk back until we meet another car and then send on word of this abandoned one," said Sid. "It's a long walk, but——"

"Hark!" cried Tom Parsons suddenly. "An auto is coming along the road."

"Maybe some of us can get a ride," proposed Phil Clinton. "We can go to town and hire a rig for the rest of you."

Along the road rumbled some big vehicle. There came in sight a big auto truck, ponderous and heavy. It was one of several used by a milk concern to transport cans to the railroad depot.

"That's the stuff!" cried Tom. "Maybe he'll take us to Dodville if we pay him."

The man was hailed and the situation explained to him. He looked dubious and shook his head.

"Why can't you take us?" asked Phil. "You say you have no load on your truck, and it isn't much out of your way. We'll pay you well."

"Maybe you would," admitted the man, "but

I've heard of you students. If some of you ran off with a trolley car, there's no tellin' but what you'd take this truck away from me at some lonely spot and go cruisin' off like Captain Kidd."

"No, no," promised the lads eagerly. "We won't cut up a bit."

They had some difficulty in convincing the man of this, but did so finally, and he allowed them to pile in. They had to stand up and the road was rough. They were jolted about, for the truck was not built for easy riding, but they did not mind that, for they felt that there was a chance to play the game, and they urged the man to put on all speed.

They reached Dodville just as the game was about to be awarded to the preparatory school on a forfeit. The members of the Randall nine who had arrived in the second trolley car, which safely made the trip, could not explain the absence of their companions.

The game was started, but it was not remarkable for any brilliant work on the part of the college freshmen. In fact the other students played all around them. Possibly this was due to the episode that had occurred, for Langridge was nervous and threw wild, giving a number of men their bases on balls. Kerr asked him to let Tom pitch, but Langridge refused arrogantly and with bitter words

against the scrub twirler. Nor would he consent that Evert should fill the box.

"I'll pitch!" he cried excitedly. "I'll strike 'em out next inning. You watch."

Tom happened to be in the dressing-room when it was the turn of Randall to bat, and Langridge came in. The 'varsity pitcher did not see his rival, but going to where his valise was containing his clothing, he took something from it. Tom saw Langridge put a bottle to his lips.

"I wonder if he's taking medicine," he thought.

A moment later the pitcher hurried from the room as his name was called to bat. Tom walked to a window that gave a view of the grounds. As he passed Langridge's valise he smelled a pungent, alcoholic odor. He started and for a moment could not tell what it was. Then it came to him.

"Liquor! He's been drinking liquor!" he almost exclaimed aloud. "He's broken the training rules. I wonder—I wonder if this is what Sid hinted at—if this is what Mr. Lighton meant!"

From the diamond there came a sharp crack. It was a bat meeting a swiftly pitched ball with that inspiring sound that indicates a fair hit. Tom saw Langridge speeding for first base, while Randall lads were yelling at the top of their voices.

"It's a three-bagger!" cried Tom delightedly, and so it proved, Langridge bringing in a run a moment later on a sacrifice hit by Holly Cross.

CHAPTER XVII

AN EXPOSTULATION

"Now we'll do 'em up!" cried Langridge, dancing about in a strange enthusiasm as he crossed the home plate. "Knock a home run, Kerr, and we'll roll up a score. Then I'll strike out the next six men."

There were but two more innings to play, and the run Langridge brought in had reduced the lead against the Randall freshmen from 6 to 5. But five runs are a big handicap, especially when you can't depend on your pitcher. Kerr struck out and so did Sid, who was up next. Langridge was disappointed, though not discouraged, and he made wild promises about what he was going to do. But he did not fulfil them and got careless in his pitching.

The game degenerated almost into a farce in the last inning, when Dodville piled up four runs, making the total score 17 to 5, it being the worst drubbing the Randalls had received in many years. The only consolation was that it was not the 'var-

sity team, but, as Kerr said, that was no excuse. There were almost jeers mingled with the cheers of the preparatory school lads, and it was a sore and sorrowful lot of freshmen who made their way to the special trolley cars, the stalled one having been brought up in the meanwhile.

"Who's eating cloves?" asked Sid Henderson as he piled into the electric and threw his big mitt on the seat beside him.

"Have some?" asked Langridge, holding out a quantity. "I had toothache and I took a few."

"No, thanks, don't use 'em," replied Sid with a quick look at the pitcher, whose eyes were unnaturally bright. "But if you have any ginger about you, it might come in handy."

"Ginger—how?"

"For this team. We need it. To be beaten by a bunch of schoolboys!"

"Well, we didn't have our regular team," explained Langridge. "Besides, I didn't have any support. I pitched well, but you fellows didn't back me up."

There was an arrogant look on his face.

"Yes, you pitched well, you did," exclaimed Kerr with an unconcealed sneer in his voice. "You did hot work, you did."

"What about my three-bagger?"

"That didn't make up for your rotten pitching!"

The others looked at Kerr in surprise. It was

something new for him to find fault openly with Langridge. The latter felt it, too, and hardly knew what to say.

"Well, I—er—I——"

"Yes, make some excuse," went on the catcher bitterly. "We got dumped, and that's all there is to it. I'm not saying I did such brilliant work—none of us did—but you did rotten, Langridge, and you know it. It isn't as if you couldn't do better, for we all know you can. You've gone stale—or—or something!"

Tom had an idea what it was that had made the pitcher go "stale." His brilliant hit and run had been followed by a reaction, the result of the stimulant he took. It is always thus.

Langridge stared at Kerr, his most particular chum, and then, as if not understanding it, went off by himself in a corner of the car. It was not a jolly party that rode back to Randall College. Nor were matters much better when they arrived. The freshmen had to endure the taunts of the sophomores concerning the trolley episode, as well as their own unexpressed disappointment at the result of the game.

"Sid," said Tom in their room that night, when his roommate was stretched out on the old creaking sofa—"Sid, if you knew some member of—er—well, the crew who didn't train properly—that is

to say, did sneaking things on the sly—didn't keep in form for a race, what would you do?"

"How's that? Is some member of the crew trying to throw the college?" cried Sid, suddenly sitting up.

"No, no. Of course not. I'm just supposing a case. You know we have to suppose cases in our psychology class. I'm just taking one for the sake of argument."

"Oh," replied Sid sleepily. "If it's only a supposititious case, all right. I thought you meant you knew of some chap who was doing a dirty trick."

"Well, suppose I did know of one—or you did —what would you do? Would you tell the coach or the captain?"

"What good would it do?"

"That's not the point. Would you?"

"Well, you must have a reason for telling. Don't you learn that in psychology?"

"Of course. Well, my reason might be that I wanted to see the crew do good work and not lose on account of some fellow who couldn't last out a race because he broke training rules on the sly. Or it might be that I wanted to see the fellow himself take a brace."

"Both good reasons, son. Both good. As the Romans say, *Mens sana in corpore sano*. You would do it for his own physical good. Very nice. For his mental improvement also."

"I'm serious," declared Tom.

"So am I, you conscientious old wind-ammer! I know it. The trouble is you're too serious. Why don't you let things slide sometimes?"

"I can't."

"No, I s'pose not. Well, then, fire away, old chap. Wait until I get more comfortable, though," and Sid turned and wiggled on the decrepit sofa until it threatened to collapse.

"You haven't answered my question yet," persisted Tom when his chum had been silent for two minutes.

"What question? Oh, blazes, Tom, I thought you'd gone to sleep. But say, why don't you come right out and say what you mean? Do you know any member of the crew who's doing that?"

"No, I don't. I told you this was a supposititious case. But, if there was one, what would you do?"

"Well, I'll give you a supposititious answer."

Sid closed his eyes. The fussy little alarm clock seemed to be counting time for him while he made up his mind.

"Why don't you tell the fellow yourself?" asked Sid so suddenly that Tom jumped.

"Would you?" he asked.

Sid arose. He came and stood close to his chum. Then he spoke.

"There be certain things, son," he said with an assumed serious air which was more than half real,

"certain things that, in college, one might better ignore. If, perchance, however, one is so constituted morally that one can't; if the laws of the Medes and the Persians are so immutable that one can't rest—why, my young philosopher, take the easiest course so long as you are true to your own motto, *Dulce et decorum est pro alma mater mori.* There, I don't know whether I've got the Latin right, but it says what I mean—tell the other fellow first—Tom," and with that he went over, picked up his trigonometry and fell to studying.

It was not an easy fight that Tom had with himself that night. He went all over the ground: the arrogance of Langridge, the scene in the dressing-room, the pungent odor of liquor and then his knowledge of it. Was it fair to the team to let the members be in ignorance of the fact that their pitcher took stimulants secretly—that he had done it before? For Tom was sure it was not the first time. Would it not mean, in the end, that Randall would lose some deciding game and the championship? Tom thought so and determined that it was his duty to do something. The question was, what? In a measure Sid had solved this for him, and before he fell asleep that night Tom determined to expostulate with Langridge the first chance he got.

It came sooner than he expected. There was a game with Boxer Hall on the grounds of the latter

university and it was expected to be a hard one, which expectation was not unfulfilled.

For the first few innings Randall seemed to have the contest well in hand. Then, during a few minutes when his side was at bat, Langridge disappeared into the dressing-room. With a heart that beat harder than usual Tom quietly followed. He was just in time to see Langridge putting away a bottle that gave out the characteristic odor.

"Don't do that!" cried Tom quickly, but in a low voice. He was hardly conscious of what he was saying.

Langridge wheeled around and faced him.

"Don't do what?" he asked sharply, his face flushed.

"Take that liquor to brace you up. You'll only pitch the worse for it, and it's not fair to the team."

Langridge took a step toward Tom.

"What right have you got to speak so to me?" he demanded. "You're a dirty sneak, that's what you are, following in here to spy on me! I guess I know what I'm doing. Can't I take a little toothache medicine without being insulted by you? Liquor! Supposing it is? The doctor ordered it for me."

"Not in the middle of a game," said Tom quietly. "Besides, it's against training rules, and you know it. It's not fair."

"Oh, I see your game," sneered Langridge. "I

know what you're after. You want to tell some story about me, thinking that I'll be dropped and you can have my place. But you can't. I'll do you yet. I'll show 'em how I can pitch!" He was boasting now, for he was not himself. "Get out of my way, you dirty sneak!" he cried. "I'm going to bat out a home run," and he put some cloves in his mouth.

He almost knocked Tom over as he rushed past him and went out in time to take his place at the home plate. He did knock a home run to the delirious delight of the team, but it was short-lived joy, for, just as in the other games, Langridge went to pieces in the box, and Boxer Hall won the game by a score of 8 to 5. But the home run of Langridge so shone out that even Kerr did not have the heart to decry his friend's ragged pitching. Coach Lighton, however, shook his head, as the championship chances for Randall College seemed fading away.

"Well," thought Tom as he accompanied the defeated team back that afternoon, "I did my duty, anyhow. I expostulated with him and was insulted for my pains. I did all I could."

But that night there came to him something like a voice asking, "Did you?" Tom tossed restlessly on his bed. "What shall I do next?" he thought.

CHAPTER XVIII

SOME "OLD GRADS"

"WHAT's the matter, old man?" inquired Sid the next morning as he rolled over in bed and looked at Tom.

"Matter? Why?"

"You look as if you'd been drawn through a knot hole, and a small one at that. What's wrong?"

"Nothing," and Tom tried to laugh it off. "I didn't sleep very well, that's all."

"For that matter, neither did I."

"Get out! I heard you snoring away like a boiler blowing off steam."

"Then I must have been tired. I never snore unless I am. Wow! ouch! Decameron's Prothonotary!"

Sid made a face that indicated intense anguish and put his hand to his side as he turned over in bed.

"What's the matter?" asked Tom anxiously.

"Strained my side when I slid for second base that time. I didn't notice it yesterday, but it hurts

like sin now. Guess I'll have to cut lectures to-day and stay in bed."

"What excuse will you give?"

"Oh, I'll say—no, I won't, either," declared Sid with a sudden change of decision. "I can't say it was playing baseball that laid me up or Moses will ask me to cut out the ball. I've got to suffer. I know what I'll do. I'll limp in chapel and on my way to lectures. I'm not prepared in trig, anyhow, and maybe they'll let me off easy. I'm sure to slump in Latin, but maybe Pitchfork will have mercy on a gladiator who was willing to die for Cæsar."

Tom felt like laughing, but he restrained himself as he saw that Sid was really suffering. The first baseman crawled out of bed with many a groan and made wry faces. He limped across the room.

"How's that?" he asked Tom. "Do I do it naturally?"

"Sure. It would deceive anybody."

"I don't want to deceive 'em. It's gospel truth. I'm as lame as a sore horse. But I'll go down."

"Let me rub it," suggested Tom, and he forgot part of his troubles in giving vigorous massage to Sid's strained side.

"It feels better. Thanks, old man," declared the hurt one as he began to dress.

"But you're limping worse than ever."

"Sure. No use losing any of the advantages of my limp. It may save me from a discredit in Latin. Oh, if you want to know how to limp come to your Uncle Dudley."

Tom laughed and prepared for chapel. He himself was in no very jolly mood, however, for he could not help thinking of the problem connected with the discovery about Langridge. That it was a problem, and no small one, Tom was ready to admit. He felt himself in a peculiar position. He had spoken to the 'varsity pitcher and had been insulted. To let him go on in his course, breaking training and endangering the success of the nine, Tom felt would not be right. Yet if he spoke to the coach or captain about it there would be but one construction put upon his action.

Tom could fancy Mr. Lighton thanking him for the information about Langridge and could even imagine the coach acting on it and warning the pitcher. Tom could see the look on the face of Kindlings when he was told. It would be a revelation. Yet for all the service that he rendered to the team there would be but one construction put upon Tom's act by his classmates—he would be accused of informing in order to oust Langridge so that he might have the pitcher's place.

"And I can't do that," declared Tom to himself. "I'll have to find some other way. I'll make one more try with Langridge."

Sid's limp did not save him in Latin, for he "slumped" most ungracefully, and with a black look Professor Tines marked a failure against him, accompanying it with words of warning. As for Tom, his worry over the secret caused him to pay too scant attention in his geography class, and he was caught napping, whereat the instructor looked surprised, for Tom was one of the best students.

The next day the scrub team went on a little trip to Morriston to play a small semi-professional nine, and Tom had a chance to show what he could do in the box. He gave a fine exhibition of pitching, so much so that the other nine was held down to a goose-egg score, and there were very few hits secured off Tom. The scrubs were wild about it and held a celebration, for it was the best victory they had scored yet.

During the next few days Tom saw little of Langridge. In fact the 'varsity pitcher seemed to be keeping out of the way of the lad who had remonstrated with him.

"I'll see him at the Boxer game Saturday," thought Tom. "If I get a chance, I'll make one more attempt, though I'm afraid it won't do any good."

The next Boxer contest was a sort of annual mid-season affair. It was a game which members of the alumnæ of both colleges made it a point to attend in even greater numbers than at the con-

tests deciding the championship. In fact of late years there had been no chance for such exhibitions, for Randall did not have a "look in" at the pennant, as Holly Cross used to say.

The game was to take place on the Randall grounds, and before the hour when it was to be played the stands and bleachers began filling up. It was a beautiful afternoon about the middle of May and a better one for a game could not have been had, even if made to order.

Oh, how Tom wanted to play! But he could only look on. The regular team came out for practice, with the substitutes waiting for a chance to go in. Then out trotted the Boxer Hall lads, to be received with a cheer. There were pretty girls galore, each one waving the flag of her particular college. Tom moved about in the grandstand, trying to pretend to himself that he was not looking for any one, but all the same his heart gave a great thump when he heard some one call:

"Tom! Mr. Parsons!"

"Why, how do you do, Miss Tyler?" he exclaimed. "I didn't know you were coming."

"Oh, yes, I wouldn't miss this for anything. I just love to see the old graduates. They are so interesting, just as if they were boys again."

She made room for Tom beside her, and he gladly availed himself of the chance.

"Yes, there are quite a few of the old boys on

hand to-day," he remarked. "Look at those two," and he pointed to two well-dressed men, each attired in a tall silk hat and a frock coat. They each had a gold-headed cane and they were very staid in looks, yet at the sight of each other they rose in their seats, clasped hands across the heads of intervening persons and one, the elder, cried out:

"Well, well! If it isn't old Skeeziks! How are you? I haven't seen you since I graduated in '73!"

"Nor me you, you old fish-pedler! How are things? Do you remember the day we kidnaped Mrs. Maguire and took all her chickens?"

"Hush! Not so loud!" cautioned the other, his face breaking into smiles. "The faculty never found out who did that, and there's no use telling now. But I am glad to see you. Do you think our boys will win?"

"I hope so, though I see by the papers they haven't been playing as good ball as when we went to school. They need a little ginger."

"That's right. I wish I was young again. We certainly had some great games."

On all sides similar scenes were being enacted and like reminiscences were being exchanged. It was a great day for the "old grads," and they took advantage of it. Many there were also from Boxer, though they occupied a different part of the grandstand. However, they exchanged visits with their former rivals during the practice.

Ford Fenton was in his element. His uncle, who had been a coach at Randall, was on hand, and Ford was showing him off as if he was a prize animal at a county fair.

Ford wanted to take his uncle around and introduce him to his classmates, but Mr. Fenton declined, as he wanted to meet some of his old friends. But this did not deter Ford from going about telling the news, and about all he could be heard to say was:

"My uncle, the former coach, is here. He came to see the game. My uncle says——"

Then the long-suffering ones would turn away, or if they were lads who had no particular regard for Ford's feelings, they would guy him unmercifully.

"Hi, Ford!" cried Holly Cross after about half an hour of this sort of thing, "have you heard the latest?"

"No. What is it?"

"Why, 'my uncle' says that if you don't stop talking about him, he's going to leave and take you with him. He says he's being 'uncled' to death."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Dutch Housenlager. "That's right, Ford, that's right," and he pretended to collide accidentally with the lad, knocking him against Holly, who promptly pushed him back.

But now practice was over. The rival captains were in conference, the umpire was taking the new ball from the tinfoil wrapping and the spectators were settling back for the contest.

"Boxer has improved since the other game," said Tom, who had been critically watching the teams at practice.

"That's what I heard," replied Miss Tyler. "Oh, I do hope our boys will win!"

"So do I," exclaimed Tom as he watched Langridge, who was first to go to the bat, in this game the visitors winning the privilege of being last up. Tom tried to notice the 'varsity pitcher, to see if he was in good form, but he could not judge then.

"Play ball!" called the umpire, and Dave Ogden, the Boxer pitcher, drew back his arm to deliver a swift curve.

CHAPTER XIX

TOM IN COLD WATER

LANGRIDGE at the first effort sent out a hot liner, which flew just over the pitcher's head. The second baseman made a jump for it and the ball began to roll along in front of the center fielder. Amid a wild burst of yells Langridge raced for first and got there safely, not daring to go on to second, as Ogden had run down to help cover it.

"That's the stuff! that's the stuff! That's the way to line 'em out!" chanted an excited voice, and Tom looked around to see the two silk-hatted "old grads" embracing each other and doing an impromptu dance in their seats.

"Aren't they jolly!" exclaimed Miss Tyler.

"Very, but they're crowing too soon. The game has only just begun. Boxer Hall will play strong."

And Tom's prediction came true, for in spite of the auspicious opening by Langridge, not a man crossed home plate for the Randalls that inning, the pitcher dying on third. Then it came the turn of the home team to show what they could do in

holding down the visitors. It looked as if they were going to do it, too, for Langridge struck out the first two men. But he gave the next one a pass to first and was batted for a two-bagger by the following player, the inning ending with one run for Boxer. The Randall College boys and their girl supporters began to look anxious and so did some of the "old grads." On the other side there was laughter, cheers and jollity, while some of the aged former students of Boxer began to chant old-time college songs.

"Oh, I do hope our fellows win," exclaimed Miss Tyler, and there was an anxious look on her pretty face, while she tapped her flag of colors impatiently against her little foot.

"Have you a bet on the game?" asked Tom. "A box of candy or some gloves?"

"No, but I want to see Randall win. Besides, Fred—I mean Mr. Langridge—he told me he was going to work hard for success, and I never like to see any one disappointed—do you?"

"No," said Tom rather shortly. He really did not care to hear his rival's praises sung by this fair damsel.

"Do you know," she went on, "I've been thinking of what you started to tell me about him the other day. Is it really true?"

"Well," began Tom slowly, "if you will excuse the privilege of a friend who has known you for

some time, I would say that I don't believe your people would like you to go with him."

"Why, mamma knows his uncle, who is his guardian, and she says he is very nice—I mean the uncle," and she laughed a little.

"I have no doubt of it. I only——"

But Tom did not say what he was going to, for just then Pinky Davenport, captain of the Boxers, knocked what Holly Cross described later as a "lalapoolassa" fly, which went clear over the center fielder's head and netted a home run for the captain of the visitors.

What yelling and shouting there was then! It seemed to put new life into the opponents of Randall, if such was needed, for they began piling up the score until they were six runs in the lead.

Then Randall "took a brace," encouraged by the yells of the "old grads" and others, and by the eighth inning had cut it down even. In the close of the eighth they held their opponents down to one run, making it necessary to gather in two to win the game, but with that it meant holding the visitors hitless in the last half of the final inning.

The first part of the program was carried out all right. By some phenomenal playing Randall managed to get the lead by one run. They would have had another but for a miscalculation on the part of Ed Kerr, who was caught napping between

third and home, where he was run down and put out.

"Now, fellows, we have them on the hip!" exclaimed Captain Woodhouse as he called his players together for a little talk before the final struggle was made. "If we can hold them down this inning we have them. Langridge, it's up to you!"

"I know it. But don't worry, I'll do it."

It sounded well, and there was a determined look in the pitcher's face, but his eyes were unnaturally bright. His pitching had been ragged during the last three innings and the sudden decline of the abilities of the Boxer players had done as much as anything to give Randall her chance.

"Oh, I hope Fred strikes three out, one right after the other!" exclaimed Miss Tyler as she shifted nervously in her seat. "He must be under a dreadful strain."

"Probably he is," said Tom. "But if he takes a brace now he'll be all right."

"He's been taking too many bracers—that's what's the matter with him," said a voice back of Tom, and he knew it was one of the former graduates speaking. Tom looked at the girl beside him. Either she had not heard or she took no notice of the remark.

It was a tense moment when Langridge sent in the first ball. It was called a strike and the batsman looked surprised. The next was a ball, but

two more strikes were called without the player getting a chance to swing at the horsehide. Langridge smiled at the cheers which greeted him. Then he did what few other pitchers could have done under the circumstances. He struck out the next two men, though one did manage to hit a high foul, which Kerr missed. Langridge had saved the game by holding the other team hitless.

Such a cheer as went up then when it was seen that Randall had won! The stamping of feet on the stands sounded like thunder. Back of Tom and Miss Tyler two old men began yelling like Indians, hugging each other and whirling about. They were the two "old grads" of '73. They were waving their hats in the air and yelling "Randall! Randall! Randall!" until their faces were the color of raw beef.

"Wow!" cried the taller of the two. "This does my heart good! I'm forty years young again. Wow! Whoop-la!"

Suddenly he drew back his hand and his silk hat went sailing over the edge of the grandstand to the grass of the outfield. It was caught by some Randall players and quickly kicked out of shape.

"Why, that was a new hat!" exclaimed the man's companion.

"I know it, but there's more where that came from. I can buy a new hat every day, but I can't

see my old college win such a game as this. Wow! Whoop!"

"That's right. I'm with you," and a second hat went the way of the first, while the old men capered about like boys. They were given a round of cheers on their own account by the team when the players understood what had happened. Ford Fenton was running about, all excited, trying to find his relative.

"Have you seen my uncle?" he asked several.

"No!" cried Holly Cross. "And if I do, I'll shoot him on sight! Get out or I'll eat you up," and with a roar of simulated wrath he rushed at poor Fenton, who beat a hasty retreat.

Tom was jubilant at the success of his college, nor did he withhold unstinted praise for Langridge. He had been surprised at the sudden improvement shown. Tom and Miss Tyler walked across the grounds toward the campus, the girl looking back several times. Suddenly Langridge appeared from amid a group of players.

"I'll be with you in a minute," he called to Miss Tyler, "as soon as I change my duds. Wait for me."

There was an air of proprietorship in the words and the girl must have felt them, for she turned away without speaking.

"Perhaps I'd better say good-afternoon," spoke Tom, a trifle piqued.

"Not unless you want to," she replied with a quick look at him.

"Of course I don't want to, but I thought——"

"Don't bother to think," she added with a little laugh. "It's tiresome. Come and show me the river. Not that I haven't seen it before, but it's so beautiful to-day, I want some one to enjoy it with me."

"How would you like to go for a little row?" asked Tom. "I can get a boat and we'll go to Crest Island."

"That will be lovely. The water is like glass."

They were soon afloat. Tom was a good oarsman and sent the light craft ahead with powerful strokes. They spent some little time on the island, where other pleasure seekers were, and when the shadows began to lengthen started back.

"I've enjoyed it ever so much," said Miss Tyler gratefully as the craft neared the float adjoining the college boathouse.

"That's good," said Tom heartily. "Perhaps you will go again."

"I probably shall—if any one asks me," she replied archly, and then he helped her out, whispering as he did so, for there were quite a number on the float, "I'll be sure to ask you, Madge." Tom may have imagined it, but he thought there was just a little return of the pressure when he pressed the hand he held.

"Well, I thought you were going to wait for me," exclaimed a voice, and Langridge pushed his way through the throng and came close to where Miss Tyler was standing, waiting for Tom to tie the boat.

"I didn't say so," she answered.

"But you—you——" Langridge did not know what to say.

"I'm afraid you'll have to excuse me now," said the girl calmly, though she smiled at Langridge in no unfriendly fashion.

"Come and take a walk," he almost ordered. "I want to say something to you."

Before she could answer Tom was at her side. He looked keenly at Langridge and was about to make some reply when the 'varsity pitcher reached out as though to link his arm in that of the girl. Miss Tyler drew back and Langridge edged himself forward. He may have been merely eager or it may have been the result of intention. At any rate, he jostled Tom to one side and the next minute the pitcher of the scrub, vainly endeavoring to retain his balance, toppled into the cold water of the river.

CHAPTER XX

A GAME OF ANOTHER SORT

"Oh!" screamed Miss Tyler. "He'll be drowned! Save him, some one!"

There was much commotion on the float. The crowd surged to the edge and it tilted dangerously.

"Get back! get back!" cried Dan Woodhouse. "Get a boathook, some one!"

"We will!" cried the Jersey twins, and together they darted for the place where the rowing craft were stored.

Langridge seemed stupefied at the result of his act. He stood there, peering down into the water beneath which Tom had disappeared.

"Get back, I tell you! Get back!" yelled Woodhouse. "We can't get him out if you tilt the float so. We'll all be in the water!"

Understanding this, the crowd of lads and girls moved back. Captain Woodhouse was peering over the edge of the dock, looking for a sight of Tom, and meanwhile was taking off his coat and vest, preparatory to a plunge in.

"There he is! I see his head!" suddenly cried Miss Tyler, and she pointed to a dark object barely visible in the shadows that were settling down over the river.

"I'll get him!" cried Langridge thickly, but he could not seem to unbutton his coat.

"Look out!" cried a voice, and a tall, lithe figure, clad only in a rowing jersey and trunks, pattered in bare feet down the length of the float.

"It's Fenmore!" exclaimed several, and the tall sophomore, who had been out in a single shell and who, arriving at the float, had understood what had happened, plunged in. He swam quickly to Tom, who seemed bewildered and unable to help himself. But, if he was dazed, which they later found to be the case, he had sense enough to let Fenmore rescue him in the proper fashion and was soon being lifted out on the float. His face was pale and blood from a cut on his forehead trickled down one cheek.

"Much hurt?" asked Dan Woodhouse as he put his arms about Tom.

"No—not—not much," gasped the rescued one. "I hit my head on the edge and that dazed me. I couldn't strike out, and I swallowed some—some water," he gulped.

"Can you walk?"

"Sure. I'm all right now," but Tom began to

shiver, for the evening had turned cool and the water was not yet right for bathing.

"Here, take my cloak for him!" exclaimed Miss Tyler, impulsively holding out a thin wrap which was more for appearance than utility. "It will keep him warm."

"It will ruin it," declared Tom. "I'm as wet as a rat."

"No matter!" cried the girl imperiously, and she tried to wrap it about Tom's shoulders.

"Here are some sweaters," said the more practical Kindlings. "Now run up to the infirmary, Tom, get into a hot bath and throw some hot lemonade into you."

Tom prepared to start off and Miss Tyler had taken back her cloak. She went closer to Tom.

"I'm awfully sorry. It was all on my account," she said. "I hope you will be all right."

"Su—sure I'll—I'll be all—all right," declared Tom, though his teeth chattered in spite of himself, for he had sustained a nervous shock.

"I'll inquire for you to-morrow," she added with a smile as she turned aside.

"I say, old man, I'm afraid I pushed you in, but I didn't mean to—'pon my soul!" exclaimed Langridge earnestly as he edged up to Tom.

"All—all right—it doesn't matter—now," answered Tom, and then his chums rushed him up to the college, where a warm bath and drinks were

soon effectively administered. No bad results attended the unexpected plunge, and that night Tom was able to join in the celebration that followed the winning of the ball game, when many bonfires blazed and the students were allowed more license than usual.

It was about a week later when, following a rather hard series of games between the scrub and 'varsity teams in which Tom had strained his arm, Coach Lighton advised him to get a new kind of liniment to rub on it. It could only be had in a certain store in town, and, obtaining permission to go there on condition that he return to college before nine o'clock, Tom started off alone one evening. Sid had to make up some lessons he was "shaky" on, and though he wanted to take the walk, he did not feel that he dared spare the time.

On his way to the drug store Tom passed the side entrance of a certain resort much patronized by the "sporty" class of students. Several lads were in there, as Tom could tell by the snatches of college songs that floated out, and as he got opposite the place the door swung open to give entrance to others and Tom saw Langridge sitting at a table with several flashily dressed lads. They were playing cards and glasses of some sort of liquor stood at their elbows, while most of them, including Langridge, were smoking cigarettes.

"He's broken training with a vengeance!" ex-

claimed Tom in a low voice as he hurried on. "Cigarettes are the limit!"

Tom tried not to think about what he had seen as he went on to the drug store and had his prescription filled. He had to wait some little time for it and as he came out he noticed by a clock that he would have to hurry if he wanted to get back to college in time.

He started off briskly and just as he got in front of the side door of the resort the portal opened and several lads came out. Langridge was with them, and all were somewhat worse for the lively evening they had spent. The 'varsity pitcher, who seemed strangely hilarious, caught sight of Tom.

"Well, if there ain't my deadly rival!" he cried in what was intended to be a friendly manner, but which was silly. "Hello, Parsons! Come in and have a cigarette!"

"No," was the answer in conciliatory tones. "I'm in a hurry to get back to the college. My time's nearly up."

"So's mine—so's all of us. But what's the odds? We've got to have a good time once in a while, eh, fellows?"

"Sure," came the chorus.

"I can't smoke, I'm in training," spoke Tom, intending it to be a hint, if not to Langridge, at least to his companions.

"So'm I, you old hunk of fried tripe! Have a smoke."

"No," and Tom started on.

"Hold on!" cried Langridge. "I'll go with you. I'm going to shake you fellows," and he waved his hand to his companions. "I'm going to be virtuous and go to bed with the larks. I wonder if larks do go to bed, anyhow."

"You mean chickens," declared one of the others with a laugh. "Come on then, fellows, if Langridge goes back, we'll stay and have some more fun."

Tom was not unwilling to play the good Samaritan, so linking his arm in that of Langridge, he led him down the street. The 'varsity pitcher was not as steady on his feet as he should have been.

"I—I s'pose you'll tell Kindlings and Lighton about me, eh, what?" he asked brokenly as he walked along.

"No," said Tom quietly. "But you ought to cut it out, Langridge, if not for your own sake for the sake of the team."

"That's right, that's right, old man, I ought. You're a good sort of chap, too preachy maybe, but all right. I ought to cut it out, but I like fun."

"You ought to give up smoking and drinking," went on Tom boldly. He had determined that this was just the chance he wanted and decided that he would take advantage of it.

"There you go again! there you go again!" cried Langridge fretfully, with a sudden change of manner peculiar to him. "Don't go to lecturing. I get enough of that from Moses and Pitchfork. Give us a rest. I'm all right. Have another cigarette."

"No," and Tom declined the proffered one.

"Oh, I forgot you don't smoke. That's right. It's bad for the heart. I don't take 'em only once in a while."

Tom tried to reason with him, but Langridge was not himself and answered pertly or else insulted Tom for his good offices.

"You ought to give up gambling, too," Tom said, starting on a new tack. They were nearing the college now.

"There you go again! there you go again!" exclaimed Langridge and he was almost crying, silly in his excitement.

He sat down on a stone along the road and lighted another cigarette.

"Now let's argue this thing out," he said. "I feel just like arguing, Parsons. Guess we'll call you 'dominie,' you're so fond of preaching. Let's argue."

Tom tried to urge him to come on. It was getting late and only by running could they reach college and report before the prescribed hour, nine o'clock. But Langridge was obstinate and would

not come. Tom did not want to leave him, for he had heard that Langridge did not stand any too well with the faculty, and a few more demerits would mean that he would have to give up athletics. So Tom determined that, if possible, he would get the foolish lad within bounds in time.

But it was a useless undertaking, and Tom heard nine strokes boom out on the chapel bell when they were some distance from college.

"That cooks our goose!" he exclaimed. "It doesn't so much matter for me, as it's the first time, but Langridge will suffer if he's caught in this plight."

He redoubled his persuasive powers and by dint of much talk at length induced Langridge to get up and come on. But it was half-past nine now and it was twenty minutes to ten, when, with his arm linked in that of the lad he was trying to save in spite of himself, Tom walked up the campus to get to the dormitory.

The watchman opened the door at his knock. Langridge had slipped behind Tom and stood in the deep shadow.

"After hours," said the man simply. "You will report to the proctor to-morrow morning, Mr. Parsons."

"Yes," replied Tom simply. Langridge was moving uneasily about in the shadows on the stone steps.

"Any one with you, Mr. Parsons?"

"Well—er—that is——"

The watchman started to go out, thinking to catch several students. At that instant Langridge, with a cunning evidently born of long experience, circled around Tom on the opposite side to that on which the watchman stood and darted down a small areaway that led to the basement.

"Ha! trying to hide!" exclaimed the guardian of the door. "I'll find out who you are!"

In the darkness he went down into the areaway. A moment later Langridge had roughly upset him there, and before the man could gain his feet, the pitcher had sprinted up the steps and into the open door of the dormitory and thence along the corridor to his room. The watchman had not had a glimpse of his face.

The man came panting up the steps.

"Who—who was that with you, Mr. Parsons?" he demanded sternly as he rubbed his bruised shins.

Tom took a sudden resolve. There might be a chance for Langridge to escape.

"I'm not going to tell," he said firmly but respectfully.

"Very well," he replied. "You must report to Mr. Zane in the morning. I'll inform him of this outrage. He'll make you tell who was with you."

"I don't believe he will," thought Tom as he went to his room.

CHAPTER XXI

ON THE GRILL

"WELL, what's up?" asked Sid as Tom came in. "You're going the pace, aren't you, old man?" and he looked anxiously at his chum, whose face was flushed from the experience through which he had just gone.

"I got in late," admitted Tom.

"Get caught?" asked Sid, as if that was all that mattered.

"Yep, but that's not the worst of it."

"What? You don't mean to say you've been caught? Well, of all things. You, one of the 'grinds,' falling a victim."

"It wasn't altogether my fault."

"How's that?"

Tom considered for a moment. Would it be violating the ethical honor of a college boy if he told his chum? Would it be contrary to the spirit of Randall? Tom thought not, merely to let Sid know what had happened. For it would go no further, and, as a matter of fact, several students

had seen Tom and Langridge leave town together. Besides, Tom wanted advice. So he told his chum everything from the time of meeting with the sporty students until the sensational retreat of Langridge to his room.

"Now, what would you do?" asked Tom. "Keep still and take what's coming or tell the proctor and use that as an excuse for coming in late? It really wasn't my fault."

Sid scratched his head. It was a new problem for him. He saw the point Tom made, that by informing on a fellow student, Tom would be held blameless, as indeed he had a right to be. Why should Tom suffer for another's fault? That came plainly to Sid. Yet he only hesitated a moment before answering.

"Of course you can't squeal," he said simply.

"That's what I thought," agreed Tom, as if that was all there was to it. "I'll have to take what's coming, I s'pose."

"Maybe proc. won't be hard on you. You've got a good record."

"Fairly. Anyhow, I hope he doesn't cut me out from baseball. Well, I'm going to bed. I wonder if they'll find out about Langridge? If the watchman thought to make a tour of the rooms, he'd discover that he just got in."

"He'll not do that. Too many of 'em. Besides,

trust Langridge for knowing how to take care of himself. He's getting reckless, though."

"Of course you won't say anything to any of the fellows about him playing cards and smoking," went on Tom, but he did not mention the drinking episode, though probably Sid guessed.

"Of course not," came the prompt answer, "but it's not fair to the rest of the team. However, I'm not going to make a holler. Hope you come out of it all right. By-by."

"Um," grunted Tom, for he was rubbing some of the liniment on his arm and the pungent fumes made him keep his eyes and mouth shut.

Sid tumbled into bed, leaving Tom to put out the light, and there was no further talk. Tom undressed slowly. He was in no mood for sleep, for he was much upset over the incident of the night, and he was not a little anxious about the next day and his prospective visit to the proctor. For the first time that he noticed it, the ticking of the alarm clock annoyed him, the fussy, quick strokes making him say over and over again the words of a silly little rhyme as one sometimes, riding in a railroad train, fits to the click of the wheels over the rail joints some bit of doggerel that will not be ousted.

"I must be getting nervous," thought Tom. "Wonder if I'm over-training?"

This idea gave him such an alarm that it served to change the current of his thoughts, and before

he knew it he had fallen asleep over a half-formed resolution to undertake a different sort of gymnasium exercise for a few days.

Tom's first visit the next morning after chapel was, as the rules required in such cases, to Proctor Zane.

"Well?" inquired that functionary in no pleasant voice as Tom stood before him, for there had been some skylarking in the college the previous night and the proctor had been unable to catch the offenders. "What is it now, Parsons?"

He spoke as though Tom was an habitual offender when, as a matter of fact, though the lad had taken his part in pranks, it was only the second time he had been "on the grill," as the process was termed.

"I got in after hours last night, sir," reported Tom quietly, though he resented the man's manner.

"Ha! So I was informed by the watchman." He looked at Tom antagonistically. "Well," he snapped, "why don't you continue? There's more, isn't there?"

"Not that I know of," replied Tom calmly. "I had permission to go to town, but I got in late, that's all."

"Oh, is it? What about the student who was with you? Wasn't there some one with you?"

"Yes, sir."

"And didn't he engage in a fight with the watchman, and, taking advantage of a mean trick, sneak to his room? Didn't he, I ask you?"

"I presume the watchman has correctly informed you of what happened."

Tom's voice was coldly indifferent now, and the proctor recognized that fact.

"He did," he snapped. "And you know of it, too. I expected you to tell me that."

"Since when has it been a college rule," asked Tom, "to confess to the doings of another student? I thought that all that was required of me was to report my own infraction of the rules."

Tom knew that he was right and that the proctor had no authority to ask him concerning the doings of Langridge, and the proctor knew that he himself was in the wrong, which knowledge, shared as it was by a student, did not add to his good temper.

"Then you refuse to say who was with you?" he snapped, his eyes fixed on Tom's face.

"I certainly refuse to inform on a fellow student, Mr. Zane," was Tom's answer, "and I don't think you have any right to ask me to do so."

If he had stopped with his first half of the reply all might have been well, for certainly the proctor did not expect Tom or any other student to be a tale-bearer, though he always asked them to speak in order to make more easy his own task. But to

be practically defied, and by a freshman, was too much for the official, who had a certain dignity of which he was proud.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, "you are impertinent, Parsons."

"I didn't so intend, sir."

"Ha! I don't have to be informed of my rights by you. I know them. You will write me out two hundred lines of Virgil by to-morrow afternoon and you will stand suspended for two weeks, with absolutely no privileges regarding athletics or going away from college!"

It was a hard sentence under any circumstances. It was an unjust one in Tom's case, and he knew it. Yet what could he do?

"Very well, sir," he replied, trying to overcome a certain trembling feeling in his throat, and he turned to go.

"If," went on the proctor in a slightly more conciliatory voice, "you think better of your resolution and let me know the name of the student who so outrageously assaulted the watchman, I may find it possible to mitigate your punishment. Mind, I am not asking you to inform me in an ordinary case of breaking the rules, but for an extraordinary infraction. The watchman has a badly injured leg. So, if you wish to inform me later, I will be glad to hear from you."

"I shall not change my mind," said Tom simply.

"Nor I mine," added the proctor, jerking out the words quickly.

Tom turned on his heel and left the room.

CHAPTER XXII

DARK DAYS

SID was waiting for Tom outside the proctor's office.

"Well?" he asked eagerly as his chum appeared, but it needed only a look at the downcast face to tell that it was not "well" but "ill."

"Rusticated!" exclaimed Tom.

"For how long?"

"Two weeks."

"On your own account, or——"

"Mainly because I wouldn't tell, I guess. Being out late just once isn't so monstrous."

"Of course not. Still you couldn't tell."

"Certainly not. It's tough, though. Suspended twice in the first term! I wonder what dad and the girls'll say."

"Don't tell 'em."

"Oh, I'll have to, but I guess they'll understand."

"It certainly is rocky," admitted Sid, "but, do you know, I envy you a bit. It's getting mighty

hard in class now. I have to bone away like a Trojan. Pitchfork has it in for me on Latin. I wish I had a vacation."

"Without baseball?" asked Tom.

"N-o—no, of course not without being on the team. But two weeks are soon over."

"Not soon enough," and Tom darted away.

"Where you going?"

"Back and study. I can't afford to fall behind in my work."

"My, but aren't you the grinder, though!" exclaimed Sid, but there was something of envy in his tone for all that. He went into recitation, while Tom continued on to their common room. He was walking along the path that led past Booker Memorial Chapel and paused for a moment to admire the effect of the early sun shining through a stained glass window. The combination of colors was perfect, and Tom, as he stood and looked at a depiction of a biblical scene which represented the Good Samaritan ministering to the stranger, felt somehow that it was a rôle that he himself had had a part in.

Then came a revulsion of feeling.

"Oh, pshaw! You're getting sentimental in your old age!" he exclaimed half aloud. "You've got to have your share of hard knocks in this world, and you've got to take what comes. But it's queer," he went on in his self-communing, "how

Langridge seems to be getting mixed up with me. This is twice I've had to suffer on his account. I'd like—yes, hang it all, what's the use of pretending to yourself—I'd like to take it out of him—in some way. It's not fair—that's what!"

The thought of Langridge brought another sort of musing to Tom. He saw a certain fair face, with pouting lips and bright, dancing eyes, a face framed in a fluffy mass of hair, and he fancied he could hear a little laugh, a mocking little laugh.

"Worse and worse," growled Tom to himself. "You're getting dopy. Better go take a long walk."

He kicked impatiently at a stone in the path and wheeled around just as a voice exclaimed:

"Ah, Parsons, admiring the windows? The color effects are never so beautiful as early morning and the evening. The garish light of day seems to make them common. But—er—are you going to recitation? If so, I'll walk along with you," and genial Dr. Churchill, with a friendly nod of his head and a twinkle in his deep-set eyes, came closer to the lad.

Tom wondered if the good doctor knew of the punishment that had just been meted out. If he did not he soon would have the report of the proctor for confirmation.

"I've been suspended," blurted out Tom. "I was going to my room to study."

"Suspended, Parsons! This is the second time, isn't it?" There was surprise and dismay in the doctor's voice.

"Yes, sir, but——" Tom paused. How much should he tell, how much leave unsaid?

"How did it happen?" asked the head of the college, and he placed his arm on Tom's shoulder in a friendly fashion. Tom said afterward that it was just as if he had been hypnotized. Before he knew it he was telling the whole story.

"But I never mentioned the name of Langridge," he protested to Sid, to whom later he related all the events. "I never even hinted at it, but for all that I believe Moses knew. He's a regular corkscrew."

Dr. Churchill was silent after the recital, a recital rather brokenly made, but containing all the essential facts.

"Suspended for two weeks!" he murmured when Tom had finished.

"With no athletics," added Tom. "Not even to see the games that are to be played here, and there are to be two."

"Hum," mused the doctor. "Well, you know we must have discipline here, Parsons. Without it we would soon have chaos. But—ah—er—hum! Well, come and see me this evening. I will have a talk with Mr. Zane. He has to be strict,

you know, very strict under certain circumstances, but—er—um—come and see me to-night."

"What do you s'pose he wants?" asked Sid when Tom had told him of the meeting.

"Blessed if I know, unless it's to give me a lecture on my conduct."

"No, Moses isn't that kind."

"He's going to restore to you all the rights and privileges of a student," declared Phil Clinton, who, together with some others of Tom's chums, was in his room.

"My uncle says——" began Ford Fenton, but instantly there was a protesting howl.

"Give me that water pitcher!" demanded Sid of Phil.

"This isn't fit to drink," was the remonstrance.

"I know it, but Fenton needs a bath, don't you, Ford? Your uncle! Say, the next time you say that we'll make you repeat the first book of Cæsar backward, eh, fellows?"

"That's right," came in a chorus.

"Well," went on Fenton in somewhat aggrieved tones, "he once told me——"

"Write it out," expostulated Phil.

"Move he be given leave to print," came from Sid, who had once heard a long debate in Congress.

There was laughter and more chaffing of luckless Fenton, whose uncle, from his own making, was like unto a millstone hung about his neck.

"Well, all the same, I'd like to know what Moses wants of you," said Phil, and the others agreed with him.

"I'll let you know when I come back," said Tom. "It's early; you can all stay here for a while."

He returned in half an hour from his call on the head of the college.

"Well?" demanded his chums of him.

"Great!" he cried. "He received me in his study. Say, were you ever there? It's a fine place. Books, books, books all over. The floor was piled full of them. There was a fire going on the grate and he was sitting there, reading some book with the queerest letters in it."

"Sanskrit," ventured Phil.

"I guess so. Well, he brought up a chair for me, and——"

"Oh, for the love of Dionysius! give us some facts," cried Sid. "What happened?"

"Well, he said he'd had a talk with the proctor and he removed the worst part of my suspension. I can go to the two games here with Boxer Hall and Fairview, but I can't play. I couldn't, anyhow, on account of my arm, so that's all right. And I can attend the special lectures in biology, which I hated to miss. I can't recite for two weeks, but I don't mind that. It's all right. I'll vote for Moses every time!"

"I should say yes," agreed Phil. "He's white, he is. But Zane—ugh! He's——"

"Treason," counseled Sid quietly. "The walls may not have ears, but the keyhole has. Better cut it, fellows, the time is almost up, and Zane's scouts will be sneaking around."

The other lads departed, leaving Tom and Sid alone.

"What about your pitching?" asked Sid.

"Well, I'll have to give my arm a rest, Mr. Lighton says, so this comes in the nature of a special providence. It isn't so bad as it looked at first."

But, in spite of his philosophy, there were dark days for Tom. It was hard to be deprived of the chance to play on the scrub and he missed the daily recitations. His arm, too, began to trouble him, and he was obliged to go to a doctor for treatment, though the medical man said all it needed was a little massage and rest. Tom, in his eagerness to excel, had overworked the muscles.

Meanwhile the 'varsity nine was kept busy at practice or with league and other games. Word came that both the Boxer and Fairview nines had greatly improved, chiefly by shifting their players about, and the Randall coach and captain wore serious looks as they "sized up" the work of the Randall team.

There came a contest with Fairview Institute on

the Randall diamond. It was a "hot" game and Fairview won.

There was anguish of heart among the Randall students and it was not assuaged when, the next week, Boxer, playing on the Randall grounds, took away a game with them, the score being 8 to 2.

"Two drubbings in two successive weeks," exclaimed Kindlings. "What are we going to do?"

"One thing we've got to do is to improve in pitching," declared the coach, and when some one brought word of this to Tom his heart, that had been heavy during the two weeks of suspension, grew lighter.

"Maybe I'll get a chance," he said to Sid. "It would make up for everything if I did."

"No one wants to see you in the box any more than I do, old chap," spoke Sid fervently.

CHAPTER XXIII

AT THE DANCE

It was the night of the junior dance, an annual affair second only in importance to commencement and a function attended, as Holly Cross used to say, "by all the beauty and chivalry of Haddonfield and all points north, south, east and west." On this occasion all strictly partisan college feelings were laid aside. Forgotten were the grudges engendered by hazings or the rivalries of the field. It was an evening devoted to pleasure, and, on the part of the juniors at least, to seeing that their girl friends and acquaintances danced to their hearts' content.

"Tom," cried Sid as they were dressing in their room, "does this dress suit seem to fit?"

"Well, it might be a little larger across the shoulders," was Tom's answer as he turned around from an attempt to get his tie just right and surveyed his chum.

"That's what I thought. I'm outgrowing it. I'm afraid it will split when I'm dancing, and I'll

be a pretty sight, won't I? I'll disgrace the girl. Hang it all, I hate a dress suit. I always remind myself of some new specimen of a bug, and I think some entomological professor will come along, run a pin through me and impale me on a cork. In fact I'd just as soon he would as to go through this agony again."

"Nonsense. You'll enjoy it," ventured Tom.

"Maybe—after it's all over."

But he managed somehow to wiggle himself into the garments and then, having asked a girl to the affair, he set off after her in a coach he had hired. Tom had not invited any one, but he heard that Miss Tyler was to be there and from the same source of information he knew that Langridge was to escort her.

"In which case," reflected Tom, "I shall probably not have a chance to dance with her."

The gymnasium had been turned into a ballroom. Around the gallery, which contained the indoor running track, flags and bunting had been festooned, the colors of Randall being prominent. From the center electric chandelier long streamers of ribbon of the mingled hues of each class were draped to the boxes that had been constructed on two sides of the room. There was a profusion of flowers and with the soft glow of the shaded lights the big apartment that was wont to resound to the blows of the punching bag, the bound of the medi-

cine ball or the patter of running feet was most magically transformed.

Over in one corner, screened by a bank of palms, was the orchestra, the musicians of which were tuning their instruments in thrilling chords which always tell of joys to come.

The guests were arriving. Bewildering bevies of pretty girls floated in with their escorts, who showed the tan and bronze of the sporting field or the whiter hue of a "dig" who spent most of his time over his books. Then came the chaperons, grave, dignified, in rustling silks, a strange contrast to the light, fluffy garments worn by the younger set.

Tom felt rather lonesome as he strolled out on the waxed floor, for most of his chums had girls to whom they were attentive, and of course they could not be expected to look after him.

"Hello, Parsons!" called a voice, and he turned to see one of the Jersey twins. Which one it was he could not determine, for if Jerry and Joe Jackson looked alike when in their ball suits or ordinary clothes, there was even less of difference when they wore formal black, with the expanse of shirt showing.

"Hello!" responded Tom.

"I'm Jerry," went on the twin. "I thought I'd tell you. My brother and I are going to play a joke to-night."

"What is it?"

"Joe's going to get talking to a girl and then he's going to excuse himself for a moment. I'll take his place and I'll pretend I don't know what she's talking about when the girl tries to continue the conversation. I'll make believe I've come back to the wrong girl. Great, isn't it?"

"Yes, except maybe for the girl."

"Oh, we'll beg her pardon afterward. Got to have some fun. I'm on the arrangement committee and I'm nearly crazy seeing that every one has a good time. Got your name down on all the cards you want?"

"I haven't it on any yet."

"No? That's a shame! Come on and I'll fix you up," and the good-natured Jerry dragged Tom about, introducing him to an entrancing quartet of pretty girls and then Tom knew enough to do the rest, which included scribbling his name down for a whole or a half dance as the case might be.

He had just finished this very satisfactory work when he heard his name called and turned to see Miss Tyler smiling at him.

"I'm awfully glad to see you," he exclaimed, starting impulsively toward her with outstretched hand. "May I have a dance?"

"Only one?" she asked with a laugh.

"All of them, if you can spare them," he said boldly.

"Greedy boy! I'm afraid you're too late. You may look," and she held out her card.

Tom, with regret, saw that it contained the initials "F. L." in many places. There was only one two-step vacant.

"Some one else has been greedy, too," he said as he filled in the space.

"Let me see," she demanded, and she made a little pout. "How dare he think I'm going to give all those to him!" she exclaimed. "Here, Tom, let me have your pencil. I never can write with the ridiculous affairs they attach to dance programs."

She used the lead vigorously on the card and then let Tom see it again. His name was in three places, and, to his surprise, on the last waltz he saw that the girl had written his initials under those of Langridge.

"What does that mean?" he asked.

"It means that I'm going to share the last dance with you," she almost whispered, "in memory of old times," and she nodded. "Don't forget now," and she shook her finger at him.

"As if I would!" exclaimed Tom.

The music began a march as the opening of the dance and the couples took their places, Langridge coming up almost on the run to claim Miss Tyler. He looked sharply at Tom.

"How are you, dominie?" he asked with a nod,

intended to be friendly, and then he led the girl away.

Tom had no partner for the march and he stood about disconsolately until the first dance. Then he went to claim his partner, whom Jerry Jackson had secured for him, a pretty little girl in a yellow dress who was a fine dancer.

"I wish you had another open date—I—er—I mean that you could give me another dance," he corrected himself quickly from the language of the ball field.

"I can," she said simply, and she gave him a quick glance, for Tom was a fine dancer.

He scribbled his name down and then had to relinquish her to another partner. Two dances after that, however, Tom was privileged to claim Miss Tyler. As he was leading her into the waltz Langridge came hurrying up.

"I thought this was my dance, Madge—Miss Tyler," he stammered.

"I wanted to vary the monotony," she said with a little laugh that had no malice in it.

"How is your arm, dominie?" she asked of Tom, looking up into his face and smiling as she gave him the nickname conferred on him by Langridge.

"Oh, much better," he answered. "How did you hear?"

"Oh, the proverbial bird, I suppose. You had

to stay away from class two weeks on account of it, didn't you?"

"No," exclaimed Tom quickly, "not on *that* account."

"Oh!" she cried, struck by the change in Tom's voice. "I—I heard so."

"Did Langridge tell you that?"

"Yes," was her answer.

"Well, it was partly on that account," and Tom turned the conversation away from what he considered a dangerous subject.

If Langridge cherished any ill will toward Tom for taking away Miss Tyler the 'varsity pitcher did not show it. But Tom noticed that he was not far from the girl's side the remainder of the evening.

"I wonder if she doesn't believe what I told her about him," thought Tom. "Well, I'm not going to say anything more. Let her find out for herself. Only—well, what's the use?" and he went to claim another dance elsewhere.

It was the last waltz. Around the brilliant, gaily decorated room swung the dancers to the strains of the enthralling music. Langridge skilfully led Miss Tyler in and out among the maze of couples. The music turned into another melody.

"I think this is about half," she said.

"About half? What do you mean?"

"Well, you were so greedy," she explained, laughter in her eyes, "that I had to punish you. I

gave half this last dance to—to the dominie," and her lips parted in a smile.

"Well, I like that!" spluttered Langridge, but just then Tom, who had been summoned from the "side lines" by a signal from Miss Tyler, came to claim her.

"I like your nerve, Parsons!" snapped Langridge, glad to be able to transfer his wrath to a foeman more worthy of it.

"It was my doing, Mr. Langridge," said the girl with some dignity.

"You had no right——" began the 'varsity pitcher.

"I fancy Miss Tyler is the best judge of that," spoke Tom coolly as he took the girl's hand.

"Is she?" sneered Langridge. "Maybe she knows who brought her to this affair then! If she does, she can find some one else to take her away," and he swung off.

For an instant Miss Tyler stood looking at him. The dancers whirled around the couple standing there and the music sounded sweetly. There was the suspicion of tears in her eyes.

"He had no right to say that!" she burst out.

"Indeed, no," agreed Tom. "But, since he has, may I have the honor of being your escort?"

"Yes," she said, and then, with a revulsion of feeling, she added, "Oh, Tom, I don't feel like dancing now. Take me home, please!"

CHAPTER XXIV

DRESS SUITS COME HIGH

So AFTER all, Tom did not get the last half of the last waltz with Miss Tyler. He did not much care, however, for, as matters turned out, he had a longer time in her company. The girl soon recovered her usual spirits and the walk to where she was stopping with relatives in Haddonfield seemed all too short to Tom.

"Will you be at the game Saturday?" he asked as they were about to part.

"What game?"

"Over at Fairview. Our team is going to try and run up a big score against them."

"I hadn't thought of going."

"Then won't you please think now?" pleaded Tom, with an odd air of patheticness, at which Miss Tyler laughed gaily.

"Well, perhaps I shan't find that so *very* difficult," she replied.

"And if you think real hard, can you get a mental picture of your humble servant taking you to

that game?" Tom was very much in earnest, though his air was bantering.

"Well," she answered tantalizingly, "I do seem to see a sort of hazy painting to that effect."

"Good! It will grow more distinct with time. I'll call for you, then. A number of the boys are going to charter a little steamer and sail down the river, and into the lake. We'll land at a point about four miles from Fairview, and go over in some automobiles."

"That will be jolly!"

"I'm glad you think so. Is the picture any clearer?"

"Oh, yes, much so. I think the autos have cleared away the mist. Aren't we silly, though?" she asked.

"Not a bit of it," declared Tom stoutly. "I'll be on hand here for you, then, shortly after lunch on Saturday."

"Is the nine going that way?"

Tom felt a sudden suspicion. Was she asking because she wanted to know whether Langridge would be in the party of merrymakers?

"No, I think they're going in a big stage."

"I thought maybe you might want to be with the nine," she went on, and Tom saw that he had misunderstood. "You might get a chance to pitch," and she looked at him.

"No such luck," replied Tom, trying to speak

cheerfully, but finding it hard work. "Well, I'll say good-night, or, rather, good-morning. When I write home I must tell my folks about meeting you here."

"Yes, do. I've already written to mine, telling what a fine time I'm having."

Tom was rather thoughtful on his way home. He stumbled into his dark room, nearly falling over something.

"What's the matter?" asked Sid, who was in bed.

"That's what I want to know," replied Tom, striking a match. "Why don't you keep your patent leathers out of the middle of the floor?" he demanded.

"I did, Tommy, me lad, as Bricktop Molloy would say, but I had to throw them out there later."

"How's that?"

"Mice. Two of the cute little chaps sitting in the middle of the floor, eating some nuts that dropped out of my pocket. I stretched out on the bed without undressing when I came in from the dance, and must have fallen asleep, with the light burning. When I woke up I saw the mice staring at me, and I heaved my shoes at the beggars, for I'd taken 'em off—my shoes, I mean—when I came in, as my feet hurt from dancing so much. Then

I doused the glim and turned in, for I knew you wouldn't be along until daylight."

"Why not?"

"Oh, I saw you going off with her. I admire your taste, old man, but it must be hard on Langridge."

"It's his own fault."

"So I understand. I heard about it."

"Um," murmured Tom, for he did not want to talk about Miss Tyler and her affairs—at least not yet. There are some things that one likes to ponder over, and think about—all alone.

The game with Fairview was looked forward to with more than ordinary interest, for the season was about half over, and a partial estimate could be made of the chances for the championship. Up to this time the three teams in the league had been running nearly even, with Randall, if anything, a trifle in the lead, not so much regarding the number of games won, but counting form. In the last two weeks, however, Fairview and Boxer had been doing some hard work, and in games between those colleges Fairview had some the best of it. If, on the occasion that was approaching, Randall won, it would put her nine in the lead, and if, on the contrary, she lost it would mean that she would be the "tail-ender," though only a few points behind Boxer, which would be second.

"We've just got to win!" declared Sid, one after-

noon, following a severe game with the scrub, who had played the 'varsity to a tie in eleven innings.

"That's right," admitted the coach. "But I think we will. We have improved all around lately."

This was true, more especially in the case of Langridge. Since the affair of the junior dance he had not spoken to Tom, and had taken pains to avoid him. But the 'varsity pitcher was certainly doing better work.

The day before the game with Fairview, Coach Lighton called Tom to one side.

"I think you had better prepare to go as a sub to-morrow," he said.

"Why, is Langridge——" burst out Tom, a wild hope filling his heart.

"No, it isn't our pitcher. But I understand Sid is falling back in his Latin, and he may not be allowed to play. In that case I'll have to do some shifting, and I *may* be able to give you a place in the field."

"Well, I don't want to see Sid left, but I would like a chance."

Tom was in rather a quandary. He had arranged to take Miss Tyler, and he could not, if he went with the team as a sub. He hardly knew what to do about it, and was on the point of going over to see her, and explain, when Sid came bursting into the room.

"Blood! blood! I want blood!" he cried as he threw his Latin grammar against the wall with such force that the covers came off.

"What ho! most worthy knight!" replied Tom gently. "In sooth, gentle sir, what hath befallen thee?"

"Heaps!" replied Sid. "Oh, Pitchfork, would I had thee here!" and he wadded up the table cover, and pretended to choke it.

"What now?" asked Tom.

"Oh, he put me through a course of sprouts for further orders this afternoon," explained Sid. "Thought he'd catch me, but I managed to wiggle through. Nearly gave me heart disease, though, for fear I'd have to be out of the game to-morrow. But I managed to save myself, much to the surprise of Pitchfork. Now I want my revenge on him."

"What can you do?"

"I don't know—nothing, I guess. I wish—hold on!" Sid struck a thoughtful attitude, looked fixedly at the floor, then at the ceiling, and finally cried: "Eureka!"

"Has some one been playing hob with your crown?" asked Tom, referring to the exclamation said to have been made by the ancient king, when he discovered, in his bath, a means of finding out if his jeweler had cheated him.

"No, but I've found a way to get even with Pitchfork."

"How?"

"Listen, and I will a tale unfold—a spike-tail at that. When I was coming in from recitation, disgusted with life in general, and with the Roman view of it, particularly, I met Wallops the messenger. He had a bundle under his arm, and you know what a talker he is. Confided to me that he was taking Pitchfork's best suit to the tailor's to be pressed, and his dress-suit to have new buttons put on, and some other fixings done. Pitchfork is going to a swell reception to-night, and will wear his glad rags. All he has now is his classroom suit, and you know what that is—all chalk and chemical stains when he goes into the laboratory once in a while on the relief shift."

"I don't seem to follow you."

"You will soon. See, as it stands now Pitchfork is without a decent suit he can wear, and he's such a peculiar build that no other professor's garments will fit him."

"Well?"

"Well, when he wants his dress-suit to go to the blow-out to-night, he's going to learn something new."

"What's that?"

"Just this. That dress-suits come high this time of the year! It's going to be the best joke yet. Now, ladies and gentlemen, with your kind permission and attention I will endeavor to give you a

correct imitation of Professor Pitchfork hunting high and low for his glad rags—particularly high. I will roll back my cuffs, to show you that I have nothing concealed up my sleeves. Now, commodore, a little slow music, please," and Sid, who had assumed the rôle of a vaudeville performer, pretended to nod to an imaginary leader of an orchestra.

CHAPTER XXV

TOM IN A GAME

"WANT any help?" asked Tom, when Sid had outlined his scheme of "revenge."

"No, I guess not, until I get ready to pull the strings. Then you can give me a hand. We'll have to do it after dark, and be mighty careful not to be caught, though."

"But how are you going to get the suit?"

"I have a plan. Watch your Uncle Dudley."

Sid spent the rest of the afternoon in making up a bundle to look like one that contained two suits just from the tailor shop. Only, in place of clothes he used old newspapers. It was toward dusk when he went out with it under his arm.

"It's about time Wallops was coming back," he said to Tom. "I'll meet him in the clump of elms, where it's good and dark, and he can't tell who I am."

"Be careful," warned his roommate.

"Sure. But I know what I'm about. Revenge is sweet! Wow! Wait until you see the face of Pitchfork!"

Sid stole carefully along to a spot near the edge of the river, where a clump of big elm trees grew. This was near the bridge on the road to Haddonfield. The spot was lonely and deserted enough at this hour to suit his purpose, and the dusk of the evening, being added to by clouds, and by the shadows of the trees, made concealment easy.

"I guess that's Wallops," murmured Sid as he peered out from behind a tree. "That walks like Wallops, and he's got a bundle under his arm. Now for a grand transformation scene."

Awaiting the psychological moment, Sid hurried out, and bumped into the college messenger. Wallops' bundle was knocked from under his arm, and, by a strange coincidence, so was Sid's.

"I beg your pardon!" exclaimed the student in an assumed voice. "Awfully careless of me, I'm sure. I beg a thousand pardons! I was in a hurry, and I didn't notice you. Is this the road to Haddonfield?"

"That's all right," replied Wallops good naturedly as his pardon was begged again. "Yes, keep straight on, and you'll come to the trolley that runs to Haddonfield."

"Let me restore your bundle to you," went on Sid, picking up both parcels.

He handed one to the messenger, and kept one himself.

" 'Twas yours, 'tis mine; 'twas his, 'tis ours," he

paraphrased. "Again let me express my sincere sorrow at this happening. I trust there was nothing in your package that could be damaged when I knocked it from your grasp."

"No, nothing but some clothes of one of the college professors. It's all right."

"And I'm sure my package isn't damaged," said Sid, in a queer voice, as he hurried away.

A little later he was telling Tom, with much mirth, how it all came about. The two, in the seclusion of their room, opened the bundle, and saw two suits, one full dress.

"Won't he howl when he finds nothing but a lot of newspapers!" exclaimed Sid. "Now for the rest of the trick."

"Maybe he'll borrow a dress suit from some student," said Tom.

"Not much he won't," replied Sid. "I thought of that, and I forwarded a message by wireless to all the dormitories that if Pitchfork sent around to borrow some glad rags, he was to be refused on some pretext or other."

Sid's precaution was well taken. A little later it was evident that something unusual had occurred. Wallops and several other college messengers were seen hurrying first to the rooms of one professor, then to the apartments of another. Each time the scouts came back empty-handed to that part of the faculty residence where Professor Tines dwelt.

"I knew they had no spike-tails that would fit him," exulted Sid. "Besides, most of them are going to the reception themselves."

There was consternation in the apartments of Professor Tines. Wallops had delivered to him the bundle of papers, and when the astonished instructor had threatened and questioned him, the unfortunate messenger could only say it was the package he had received from the tailor. That worthy, on being appealed to by telephone, declared that he had sent home the professor's garments. Wallops had no idea that the stranger he met in the wood had played a transformation trick on him, and Professor Tines, in his anxiety to get dressed, and go to the reception, did not dream that it was a student prank. Rather he blamed the tailor, and made up his mind to sue the man for heavy damages.

Then, just as Sid had expected, the instructor endeavored to borrow a dress-suit from one of the students. But they had been warned, and were either going to wear their suits themselves, or had just sent them to the tailor.

"What shall I do?" wailed Professor Tines. "I can't go in this suit," and he looked at his acid-and-chalk-marked classroom garments. "Yet I was to read a paper on early Roman life at this reception. It is too provoking. I can't understand why none of the students have a suit available."

"You could have one of mine, only——" began Dr. Churchill as he looked first at the figure of the professor, and then at himself. "I'm afraid it wouldn't fit," he added.

"No—no, of course not!" exclaimed Mr. Tines distractedly. "I will telephone that rascally tailor again. Never, never shall he press another suit of mine!"

But the knight of the goose and needle insisted that the professor's clothes had been sent home, and that was all there was to it. Mr. Tines could not go to the reception, and, as it was an important affair, where nearly all of the faculty was expected to be present, he was grievously disappointed.

When all was quiet that night a party of students, including Sid and Tom, stole out to the campus. They worked quickly and silently.

"There!" exclaimed Sid, when all was finished. "I rather guess that will astonish him!"

In the morning the attention of most of the college students, and several of the faculty, was attracted to a throng of passersby staring up at the flagstaff. They would halt, point upward, make some remarks, and then, laughing, pass on. Some one called the attention of Dr. Churchill to it.

"Why, bless my soul!" he exclaimed as he prepared to go out. "I hope none of the students have put the flag at half mast or upside down."

He put on his far-seeing spectacles, and walked

out on the campus. There, at the top of the pole, was a figure which looked like a man, with outstretched arms.

"What student has dared climb up there?" exclaimed the head of the college. "Send for Mr. Zane at once," he added to Professor Newton, who had accompanied him. "He must be severely punished—the venturesome student, I mean."

"I hardly think that is a student," replied Mr. Newton.

"Do you mean to say it is some outsider?"

"I think it is no one at all, Dr. Churchill. I believe it is an effigy. See how stiff the arms and legs are."

"I believe you are right," admitted the venerable doctor.

His belief was confirmed a moment later, for a farmer, who was driving along the river road, left his team, and came up the campus, a broad smile covering his face.

"Good-morning, Dr. Churchill," he said. "Is this a new course in eddercation you're givin' the boys?"

"Ah, good-morning, Mr. Oakes. What do you mean?"

"Why, I see you've got a scarecrow up on that liberty pole. I thought maybe you was addin' a course in agriculture to your studies. Only if I was you I wouldn't put a scarecrow up so high.

There ain't no need of it. One low down will do jest as well. And another thing, I allers uses old clothes. There ain't no sense in puttin' a swaller-tail coat an' a low-cut vest on a scarecrow. Them birds will be jest as skeert of an old coat and a pair of pants stuffed with straw as they will of a dress-suit. That's carryin' things a leetle too fur!" and the farmed laughed heartily.

"Dress-suit! Scarecrow!" exclaimed Dr. Churchill, and then he got a glimpse of the figure on top of the pole. It was arrayed in a full-dress suit, and Professor Tines, coming out a moment later, beheld his missing garments.

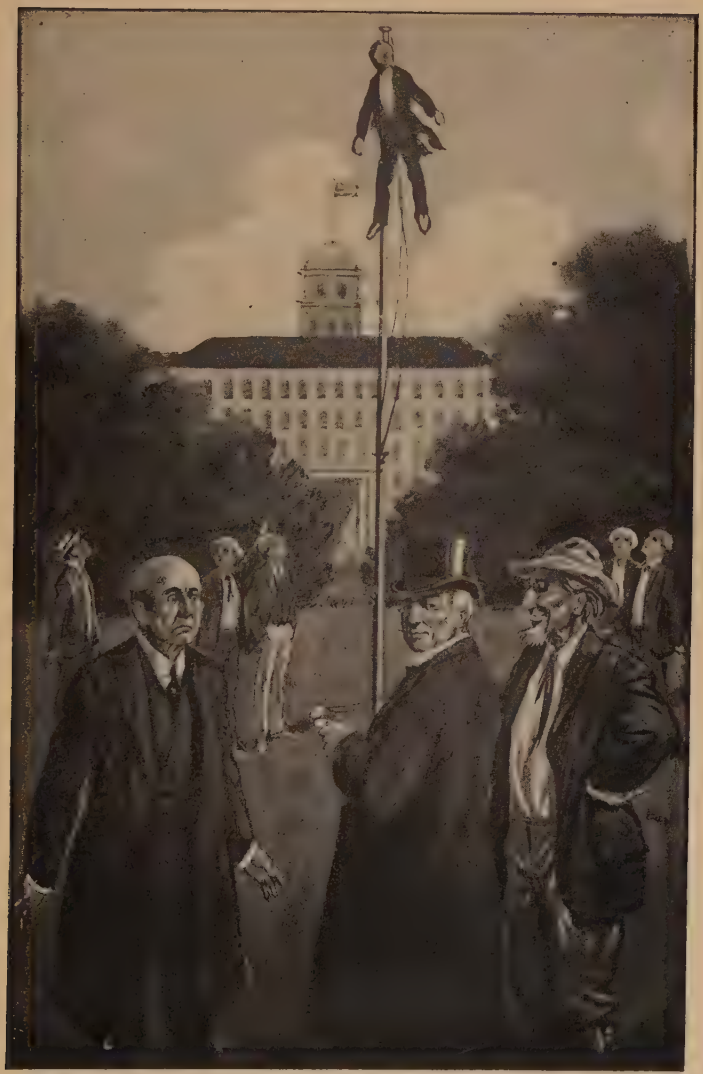
"This is an outrage!" he declared. "I demand the instant dismissal of the student or students responsible for this, Dr. Churchill!"

Dr. Churchill tried hard not to smile, but he had to turn his face away.

"I am greatly obliged to you, Mr. Oakes, for your information," said the head of the college to the farmer, who was still laughing. "Our improvised scarecrow shall be taken down at once."

"Scarecrow!" exclaimed Professor Tines. "I think——" But wrath choked his utterance. "I demand that my suit be taken down at once!" he went on, after a pause, "and that the guilty ones be punished!"

"They shall be, I assure you," promised Dr.



DR. CHURCHILL HAD TO TURN HIS FACE AWAY—*Page 222*

Churchill, "when I learn who they are. If you hear, professor, let me know."

"I shall. But I want my suit. Perhaps it is ruined."

But a new difficulty now arose, for Sid and his fellow conspirators had fastened the halyards high up on the pole, and it was not until Professor Tines had sent Wallops for a ladder that the ropes could be untied and the suit lowered. During this process a group of students gathered at a respectful distance from the flagstaff and looked on interestedly.

But, though a strict inquiry was made, no one was ever punished for the "scarecrow joke" as it came to be called, and it is now one of the traditions of Randall College.

Owing to the fact that Sid had "made good" in Latin he was not barred from the game that day, and there was no chance for Tom to act as substitute. He went with Miss Tyler, and the trip on the river, lake, and in the auto was a delightful one.

There was a big crowd on the bleachers and grandstand when the nines began to play, and rivalry in singing college songs, giving college yells and waving college colors ran high.

Randall got two runs in the first inning, and for three more Fairview secured only zeros. Langridge was pitching fine ball. Then Lem Sellig, who was doing the "twirling" for Fairview, seemed to

warm up to his work, and struck out a surprising number of men. In the seventh inning Fairview secured five runs, and in the eighth they reeled off five more, for Langridge grew reckless, and not only gave men their bases on balls in rapid succession, but struck two men, which gave them free passes to first.

"He's going to pieces!" exclaimed Coach Lighton as he saw the score piling up against his men. "It's got to stop, or we'll be the laughing stock of the league."

Yet he did not like to take Langridge out. Captain Woodhouse was angry clear through, and as for Kerr, he openly insulted the pitcher.

"What's the matter?" the catcher cried after a particularly bad series of balls and a fumble on the part of Langridge that let in a run. "You're rotten to-day!"

Langridge flushed, but his face had been rosy-hued before that, and twice he had gone to the dressing rooms, whence he came odorous of cloves.

Then the "rooters" seeing their game took up cries of derision against the pitcher, in an endeavor to "get his goat."

Langridge bit his lips and threw in a fierce ball. There were two out, but it looked as if it would go on that way indefinitely. Frank Sullivan, a good batter, hit it fairly, but Joe Jackson, out in left field, made a desperate run for it, and got the ball.

It was a sensational catch, and was roundly applauded.

When Randall came to the bat for the last time the score was 12 to 2 in favor of their opponents.

"We can't win," said Kindlings hopelessly.

"No, but for the love of Mike, don't let them roll up any bigger score against us, or they'll put us out of the league," begged Bricktop Molloy. "Speak to Langridge, and tell him to hold hard."

"What's the use speaking to him?" asked Kerr gloomily. "He'll go off his handle if I do. He told me never to speak to him again, just because I called him down a bit. Land knows he needed it!"

"We've got to make a change," decided the coach. "I'll not let Langridge pitch next inning. If he does I'll resign, and I'll tell him so."

He walked over to the pitcher, and soon the two were in earnest conversation.

Randall could not make another run, for Sellig was doing his best and they did not get a hit off him.

"Our only chance is to strike them out," murmured Kerr as he arose from the bench to take his place. "Who's going to pitch, Mr. Lighton?"

"Tom Parsons."

"Tom Parsons? What's the matter with our regular substitute, Evert?"

"His arm is no good and he's out of practice. I'm going to put Tom in."

And much to his astonishment Tom was summoned from the grandstand, where he was talking to Miss Tyler about the slump.

"Me pitch? Are you sure Mr. Lighton sent you for me?" he asked Jerry Jackson, who had brought the message.

"Sure. Come on and get into part of a uniform."

"Yes, do go," urged Miss Tyler. "I—I hope you beat them."

"It's too late for that now," replied Tom sadly as he walked down from the stand.

A little later he was in the box, facing Roger Barns, one of the best hitters on the Fairview team. Tom was nervous, there is no denying that, but he held himself well in control. It was the goal of his ambition—to pitch on the 'varsity, and he was now realizing it. True, it was almost an empty honor, but he resolved to do his best, and this thought steeled his nerves, even though the crowd hooted at him.

And he struck out the first three men up, at which his college chums went wild, for it was all they had to rejoice over in the game.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE FRESHMAN DINNER

THEY wanted Tom to ride back to the college with the team and the substitutes, but he would not leave Miss Tyler, and, though he was torn between two desires, he went back to the girl.

Moreover, he had an idea that it would not be altogether pleasant riding in the same stage with Langridge, who, he had heard whispered, made strenuous objection when Coach Lighton ordered him to give place to Tom.

"He'll be down on me more than ever," thought Tom as he made his way back to the grandstand, which was rapidly emptying. "Well, I can't help it."

"Your arm must be much better," remarked Miss Tyler as Tom came up to her. "You pitched finely."

"Well, I've had plenty of practice," was his answer. "I fancy Langridge was tired out," he added generously. "It's no fun to pitch a losing game."

"But you did."

"Oh, well, it was my first chance on the 'varsity, and I would have welcomed it if the score had been a hundred to nothing."

"Will you pitch regularly now?"

"I don't know. I hope——"

But Tom stopped. He had almost forgotten that Miss Tyler was very friendly to Langridge, in spite of the little scene at the dance.

For two days after the disastrous game with Fairview Langridge sulked in his room and would not report for practice. He talked somewhat wildly about Tom, the latter heard, and practically accused him of being responsible for his disgrace. He even said Tom was intriguing against him to win away his friends; meaning Kerr especially, for the 'varsity catcher announced that he was done with Langridge as far as sociability was concerned. But Kerr, hearing this, came to Tom's defense, and stated openly that it was Langridge himself who was to blame.

Mr. Lighton would stand for no nonsense, and ordered Evert into the pitcher's box, promising that Tom should have the next chance. He would have made Tom the regular substitute but for the fact that Evert, by right of seniority, was entitled to it. Hearing this news, Langridge came out of his sulks and resumed practice.

"I have a large framed picture of Randall winning the league pennant," announced Sid gloomily

one night as he and Tom were sitting in their room. "Our stock is about fifty below par now, and with only a few more games to play, we've practically got to win them all in order to top the league."

"Maybe we'll do it," said Tom, in an endeavor to be cheerful.

"We might, if you pitched, but Langridge is that mean that he'll keep in just good enough form so Mr. Lighton won't send him to the bench, and that's all. He won't do his best—no, I'll not say that. He is doing his best, but—well, something's wrong, and I guess I'm not the only one who knows it."

"No," said Tom quietly. "I do and have for some time. It's been a puzzle to know what to do; keep still and let the 'varsity be beaten or squeal on Langridge."

"Oh, one can't squeal, you know."

"No, that's what I thought, especially in my case. It would look as if I was grinding my own ax."

"That's so. No, you can't say anything. But it's tough luck. Maybe something will turn up. We've got a couple of games on our own grounds next, and we may do better. If we don't, we may as well order our funeral outfits. Well, I'm going to bone away at this confounded Latin. Ten thousand maledictions be upon the head of the Roman who invented it!"

Sid opened his book, and studied for half an hour. Tom likewise was busily engaged, and only the ticking of the clock was heard, when suddenly there came a gentle tap on the door.

"Who's there?" demanded Tom.

"Yellow, sky-blue and maroon," was the reply, which indicated that a freshman was without, that being the password.

"Flagpole," answered Sid, which being translated meant that it was safe to enter, no member of the faculty nor scout of the proctor's being nigh.

Dutch Housenlager pushed open the portal and entered. He looked carefully around, and then, coming on tiptoe to the middle of the room, after having carefully shut the door, said in a whisper:

"It's all arranged!"

"Nay, nay, kind sir," retorted Sid, with a shake of his head.

"Nay nay what?" demanded Dutch indignantly.

"No tricks to-night," went on Sid. "We're two virtuous young men. We belong to the ancient and honorable order of *infra digs* to-night, Dutch. Too near the exams. Thus did I exclaim 'nay, nay, kind sir.' We are not to be tempted, nay, even if it were to take mine ancient enemy, Pitchfork, and drop him into the lake; eh, Tom?"

"Yes. I can't afford to take any chances. Twice bitten once shy, or words to that effect, you know. I, too, am delving into the hidden paths

that lead to the spring of which the poet doth sing."

"Say, you two give me a sore feeling in the cranium!" exclaimed Dutch as he sank into the easy chair with force enough almost to disrupt it. "Who's asking you to play any tricks?"

"Aren't you?"

"No."

"Fiat justitia, ruat cælum!" exclaimed Tom, with mock heroics. "We have done you an injustice, most noble Dutchman. Say on, and we will hear thee."

"I've a good notion not to," said Housenlager a bit sulkily. "Here I come in to tell you fellows a piece of news, and I find you boning away, and when I start to talk you spout Latin mottoes at me. I've a good notion to dig out."

"Stay! Stay, dear friend!" cried Tom, laughing. "There, we'll chuck studying for to-night, eh, Sid?"

"Sure. I'm sick of it."

"Now, say on," invited Tom.

Somewhat mollified, Dutch took an easier position in the creaking chair, thereby raising a cloud of dust, and remarked:

"Well, the freshman dinner will come off to-morrow night. It's just been decided."

"Honest?" cried Sid.

"Sure. Our committee has everything in shape,

and we'll fool the sophs this time. Ford Fenton and I have been going around notifying the fellows. You see, we had to keep it quiet, because those sophs will put it on the blink if they can."

"Sure they will," agreed Tom. "Where is it to be——"

He stopped suddenly, for there was the sound of footsteps in the hall outside.

"Some one is spying," whispered Sid. Softly he opened the door and then he laughed. "It's Fenton," he said as the other entered.

"All through?" asked Dutch of his partner.

"Yes. I don't believe the sophs suspect. A few years ago, when the freshmen had a dinner, the sophs ate it all up, and my uncle says——"

Tom significantly reached for a heavy book, and Ford, with a disappointed look, stopped his reminiscence.

"It's to be in Cardigan Hall, in town," explained Dutch, "and we'll start from here in a——"

He paused in a listening attitude and tiptoed over to the door. Throwing the portal open suddenly, he darted into the hall, the others crowding up close to see what was going on.

"Some one was out there," declared Dutch as he came back, "but I couldn't catch him. Maybe it was only one of our boys, though. Now I'll tell you the plans," and he proceeded to go into them into detail, telling Tom and Sid where to join the

other freshmen the next night, in order to steal away to Haddonfield and hold their banquet undisturbed by the sophomores.

Tom and Sid promised to be on hand, and the two members of the committee departed, Ford Fenton being unable to tell what it was his uncle had said. As Tom saw their guests to the door, something bright and shining in the hall attracted his attention.

"It's a matchbox," he remarked as he picked it up. "It's got initials on, too."

"What are they?"

"Hum—look like H. E. G."

"Horace E. Gladdus," said Sid. "I wonder if he was sneaking around here trying to catch on about the dinner?"

CHAPTER XXVII

TOM IS KIDNAPPED

For a moment Tom looked at Sid. The same thought was in both their minds.

"Had we better tell Dutch?" asked Tom.

"It wouldn't be a bad plan."

"All right, I'll let him know. If Gladdus and his crowd find out our plans they'll spoil 'em."

So Tom hastened after Dutch Housenlager and related the finding of the matchbox and the suspicion engendered by it—that Gladdus had been listening in the hall.

"All right," remarked Dutch. "We'll change our plans a bit. I'll see you later."

Tom and Sid did not feel like resuming their studies after what had happened. Instead they sat talking of the prospective dinner, Sid stretched lazily at full length on the sofa, while Tom luxuriously sprawled in the easy chair.

"I tell you what it is, old man," said Sid, "it's mighty comfortable here, don't you think?"

"It sure is."

"And to think that next term we'll have to go into the west dormitory," went on Sid. "We'll be bloomin' sophs then. At least you will."

"That's very nice of you to say so, but what about yourself?"

"I'm not so sure," and Sid spoke dubiously. "That confounded Latin will be the death of me. I tell you what it is. I was never cut out for a classical scholar. Now, if they had a course of what to do on first base, I'd be able to master it in, say, a four years' stretch. But I'm afraid I'll go the way of our mutual acquaintance Langridge, and spend two years as a freshman, at which rate I'll be eight years getting through college."

"Oh, I hope not. You stand better than Langridge. He's smart—not that you aren't—but he doesn't get down to it. It's just like his baseball practice, if he would only——"

Then Tom stopped. He didn't want to talk about the player whom he was trying to supplant on the nine. "Well," he finished, "I guess I'll turn in. We'll have to see Dutch in the morning and learn what the new plans are."

Housenlager and his fellow members of the freshman dinner committee found it advisable to make a change after what Sid and Tom had discovered.

"But we can't alter the time or place of the feed," explained Dutch. "It's too late to do that.

Anyway, there's no danger once we get inside the hall, for we've arranged to have the doors bolted and braced and guards posted. The only danger is that they'll get at some of us before we get to the place or that they'll get at the eating stuff in some way and put it on the blink."

"I shouldn't think there'd be much danger of that," spoke Tom. "Won't the man who is going to supply it look out for that end?"

"I s'pose he will," admitted Dutch, "so the main thing for us to do is to see that we get safely to the hall. I think we'd better not meet down near the bridge, as I proposed first. You know, we were all going in a body. I think now the best way will be for us to stroll off by ones and twos. Then there won't be any suspicion. The sophs will be on the watch for us, of course, but I think we can fool them."

"Then you mean for each one of us to get to the hall as best he can?" asked Sid.

"That's it," replied Dutch.

"Some fellows did that one year," put in Ford Fenton, "but the sophs caught them just the same. My uncle says——"

He paused, for the group of lads about him, as if by prearranged signal, all put their hands over their ears and all began talking at once loudly.

"Hu!" ejaculated Ford. "You think that's funny, I guess."

"Not as funny as what your uncle might have said," remarked Sid, who some time previously had planned to have his chums give this signal of disapproval the moment Ford mentioned his relative.

"Well, I guess it's all understood," went on Dutch. "We'll have a sort of go-as-you-please affair until we get to the hall in Haddonfield."

"I hear Langridge isn't coming," said Ford.

"Who told you?" asked Sid.

"Why, he did. I asked him if he was going to be on hand, and I told him about a dinner where my uncle said——"

"I guess he doesn't want to come because he is afraid your uncle will be there," declared Tom with a good-natured laugh.

"More likely because the dinner isn't going to be sporty enough for him," was the opinion of Dutch. "Well, we don't want anybody that doesn't want to come. But I've got to go and attend to some loose ends. Now mind, mum's the word, fellows, not only as regards talk, but don't act so as to give the sophs a clue. See you later," and he hurried off.

Few in the freshman class did themselves justice in recitations that day from too much thinking about the fun they would have at the dinner that night. Even Tom fell below his usual standard, and as for Sid, his rendering of Virgil was some-

thing to make Professor Tines (who was a good classical scholar, whatever else he might be) shudder in anguish. But Sid didn't mind.

"I tell you what it is, old man," spoke Sid to Tom that evening as they prepared to leave for the spread, "we'd better go it alone, I think."

"Just what I was about to propose. If we leave here together, some sneaking soph will be sure to spot us. Will you go first or shall I?"

"You'd better take it first. There's a hole in one of my socks I've got to sew up. I never saw clothes go the way they do when a laundry gets hold of 'em."

"Can you darn socks?"

"Well, not exactly what you'd call *darn,*" explained Sid. "I just gather up a little of the sock where the hole is and tie a string around it. It's just as good as darning and twice as quick. I learned that from a fellow I roomed with at boarding school. But go ahead, if you're going."

It was quite dark now and Tom, after a cautious look around the entrance of the dormitory, to see if any sophomores were lurking about, stole silently down toward the river. He intended to take the road along the stream, cross the bridge and board a trolley for Haddonfield, which plan would be followed by a number of the freshmen.

Tom was almost at the bridge when he saw a

number of dark shadows moving about near the structure.

"Now, are they sophs or our fellows?" he mused as he cautiously halted. He thought he recognized some of his classmates and went on a little further.

"Here comes one!" he heard in a hoarse whisper.

Tom stopped. It was so dark he could not tell friends from foes. But he knew a test. A countersign had been agreed upon.

"What did the namby-pamby say?" he asked.

Back came the answer in a hoarse whisper:

"Over the fence is out!"

It was the reply that had been arranged among the freshmen. Confident that he was approaching friends, Tom advanced. A moment later he found himself clasped by half a dozen arms.

"We've got one!" some one cried, and he recognized the voice of Gladdus. "Take him away, fellows, and wait for the next. I guess the freshies won't have so many at their spread as they think!"

"Kidnapped!" thought Tom disgustedly as he was hustled away in the darkness. "Now they'll have the laugh on me and some of the other fellows all right. They have discovered our countersign or else some one gave it away."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE ESCAPE

AFTER the first shock of surprise was over Tom struggled against being taken away by his captors. He almost succeeded in breaking loose, but so many came at him, crowding close around him, that by sheer weight of numbers they formed an impassable barrier.

"It's all right, freshie, you're hooked good and proper, so don't try to get away," advised a tall youth whom he recognized as Battersby.

"All right," agreed Tom good-naturedly, though he by no means intended to give up trying to escape. But he would bide his time. "Where are you going to take me?" he asked.

"Oh, a good place. You'll have plenty of company. Take him along, fellows. I'll go back and help capture some more. The idea of these freshies thinking they could pull off a dinner without us getting on to it. The very idea!" and Battersby laughed sarcastically. He and Gladdus had fully recovered from the electric shocks and were prob-

ably glad of a chance to make trouble for the freshmen.

Tom, in the midst of half a dozen sophomores, was half led, half pushed along a dark path, over the bridge and then down a walk which extended through the woods. He recognized that he was being taken toward a little summer resort on the shores of the lake.

Once he thought he saw a chance to break loose as the grips on his arms loosened slightly, but when he attempted it he was handled so roughly that he knew the sophomores had made up their minds to hold on to him at any cost.

"You're our first prisoner," explained one lad, "and for the moral effect of it we can't let you get away. You'll have company soon."

A little later Tom was thrust into a small shanty. He recognized the place as one that had been used for a soda water and candy booth at the picnic grounds, but which shack had not been opened this season yet, though others near it were in use. There was nothing doing at the grounds on this night and the resort was deserted.

"Lock the door," exclaimed some one as Tom was thrust inside. "Then a few of us will have to stand guard and the others can go back and help bring up the rest."

Tom staggered against some tables and chairs

in the dark interior of the shack. He managed to find a place to sit down.

"We're a bright lot of lads," thought the scrub pitcher, "to be taken in after this fashion. We should have stuck together and then we could have fought off the sophs. But it's too late now. I wonder if Sid was caught?"

He listened and could hear the retreating steps of his captors. That all had not gone and that some were left on guard was indicated by the low talk that went on outside and by the tramping about the shack of several lads.

"Can he get out?" Tom heard some one ask.

"No. The place is nailed up tight."

"Maybe I can't and maybe I can," mused Tom. "Anyhow I'm going to have a look. Wait until I strike a match."

Holding his hat as a protection, so that no gleams would penetrate possible cracks in the door, Tom struck a light and examined the walls of his prison. The shack consisted of only one room and was cluttered up with chairs, tables, benches, counters and other things. Tom at once eliminated from his plan of escape the front, as there he knew the sophomores would remain on guard. He must try either the sides or the back. The sides, he saw, were out of the question, as they contained only small windows, hardly big enough for him to get

through. In addition the casements were closed by heavy wooden shutters, nailed fast.

"No use trying them," thought Tom. "The back is the only place."

This he examined with care, and to his delight he saw what he thought would enable him to get out. This was an opening near the top, and it was closed by a thin wooden shutter swinging on a hinge.

"It's nailed fast," Tom remarked when, by dint of lighting many matches inside his hat, he had examined the shutter. "But I can reach it by standing on two chairs, and if I can get it open, I can crawl out and drop to the ground. But how am I going to pull out those big nails?"

Indeed it did seem impossible, but Tom was ingenious. His fingers, when he had thrust his hands into his pockets, had touched his keen-bladed knife, the one that had gotten him into trouble about the wire and which had been returned to him by the proctor.

"I can cut away the wood around the nails," he thought, and at once he put his plan into operation. He managed to get two chairs, one on top of the other, and mounting upon this perch, he attacked the shutter. Fortunately the wood was soft, and working in the darkness by means of feeling with his fingers around the nails, Tom soon had one spike cut free of the shutter. Then he began on the

others, and in half an hour he could raise the solid piece of wood. A breath of the fresh night air came to him.

"No glass in it," he exclaimed softly. "That's good. Now to get away and show up at the dinner. I hope they didn't get any other fellows. They haven't brought any more here, that's sure."

He listened at the door a moment.

"I wish some of our fellows would come back," he heard one of the guards saying.

"Yes, it's lonesome here. I wonder if Parsons is still there?"

"Sure he is. How could he get away?"

"That's so. He couldn't."

"Wait a bit," whispered Tom.

He again mounted the chairs, and pulling himself up by the edge of the opening, after fastening up the shutter, he prepared to crawl through and drop down outside.

"I hope it isn't much of a fall and that the ground is soft," he murmured.

Just then he heard a commotion in front of the shack.

"They're bringing up some more of our class," he reasoned. "Maybe I can help 'em. Had I better stay in?" He was undecided, and he remained on the edge of the window, partly inside and partly outside the shanty. He heard the door open, and looking back in the semi-darkness, saw that a strug-

gle was going on. He guessed that the sophomores were trying to thrust inside one or more freshmen. Then another shout told Tom that his escape was discovered.

"I'll drop down outside," he decided, "and see what I can do toward a rescue."

He looked down. In the gloom below the high window was a figure.

"Look out, soph, I'm going to drop on you!" cried Tom warningly. He heard a half-smothered exclamation and then he let go, prepared to defend himself against recapture.

The fall was longer than he anticipated, for there was a depression at the back of the cabin. He toppled in a heap, and before he could straighten up, he saw some one rushing toward him. Then around the corner of a shack came two figures, one carrying a lantern.

"What's up?" they cried together.

Tom was aware that the dark figure which he had seen underneath the window was jumping toward him. The light of the lantern shone full on Tom's face. He was in the act of struggling to his feet when he felt some one kick him in the side, and as the toe of a heavy shoe came against his right elbow with crushing force the pain made Tom cry out.

The lantern swung in a circle and by the light

of it Tom, glancing up, saw Langridge standing over him. It was he who had administered the kick. Then the light appeared to fade away, and Tom felt a strangely dizzy feeling. He seemed to be sinking into a bottomless pit.

CHAPTER XXIX

ANTICIPATIONS

TOM became dimly aware that he was climbing up from some great depth. It was hard work, and he felt as if he was lifting the whole world on his shoulders. No, it was all on one arm—his right—and the pain of it made him wince.

Then he realized that some one was calling him, shaking him, and he felt as if he had tumbled, head first, into some snow drift.

"Wake up, Tom! Are you all right, old man? What happened? Here, swallow some more water."

He opened his eyes. He saw in the darkness some one bending over him.

"What's the—where am——" he began, and he was again seized with a feeling of weakness.

"You're all right, old chap," he heard some one saying. "You had a bad fall, that's all."

"Phil!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, it's me, Clinton. They tried to put me in there, but I fought 'em, and then there came a

yell for help for the sophs who were bringing up a lot of our fellows, and the ones who had me and those on guard cut for it. I guess our lads got away. I heard a row back here and came to see what it was. Are you all right now? Can you walk? If you can, we'll go on to the dinner. We've beaten out the sophs. Can you manage?"

"I—I guess so," replied Tom, who was feeling stronger every moment. If only that terrible pain in his arm would cease. "Where's Langridge?" he asked.

"Langridge? He isn't around. I haven't seen him to-night at all," answered Clinton. "Feeling better?"

"Yes, I'm all right. Only my arm."

"Is it broken?"

"No, only bruised. Some one kicked—I guess I must have fallen on it," Tom corrected himself quickly. His mind was in a tumult over what had happened. He had seen Langridge plainly in the light of a lantern carried by one of the sophomores, and he felt that Langridge must have seen him, for the gleam struck full on his face. Yet why had the 'varsity pitcher attacked Tom? Could he have mistaken him for a sophomore? Tom hardly thought so, yet the kick had been a savage one. His arm was swelling from it.

"Are you sure they didn't catch Langridge?" asked Tom as he stumbled on beside Phil.

"Sure. He said he wasn't going to the dinner at all. Had a date in town with some girl, I believe." Tom winced, not altogether with pain. "Why are you so anxious about Langridge?" went on Phil.

"Nothing, only—only I thought I saw him around the shack."

"Must have been mistaken. You and I were the only ones they managed to get this far, and they wouldn't have had me, only about a dozen of them tackled me at once."

"That's what they did to me," admitted Tom.

"Our fellows made a mistake," declared Phil. "We should have been more foxy. However, I think we all got away. The last bunch the sophs tackled were too much for them, and they had to call for help. That's why those at the shack left it. But come on, we'll get to Haddonfield. It isn't very late."

Tom did not feel much like going to a dinner, but he repressed his disinclination and bit his lips to keep back little exclamations of pain.

Phil and Tom, eluding the sophomores who prowled about in scattered parties, found most of their chums gathered in the hall where the spread was arranged. They were greeted with cheers on their entrance and made to tell their adventures, but Tom did not mention Langridge. He explained his injured arm by saying he had twisted it in his fall.

"Hope it doesn't knock you out from pitching, old man," spoke Sid sympathetically.

"It would if I had a chance to pitch," responded Tom, "but, as it is, I guess it isn't going to make much difference."

Several other freshmen who had been caught by the sophomores, but who managed to escape, came straggling in, filled with excitement, and the dinner was soon under way, with many a toast imbibed in cider, ginger ale or water, to the confusion of the sophomores and the success of the freshmen.

"We fooled 'em good and proper!" cried Sid, who had been elected toastmaster. "We put 'em to rout, and now let us eat, drink and make a big noise!"

Which they proceeded to do, undisturbed by any further attack of their traditional enemies.

Tom's arm pained him so before the dinner was over that he whispered to Phil that he was going to leave. The big center fielder agreed to accompany Tom back to college, and without saying anything to the others to break up the fun, they slipped quietly away. Dr. Marshall, of the faculty, who was a physician as well as an instructor in physics and chemistry, looked critically at Tom's arm when Phil insisted that his chum get medical aid.

"You say you got that in a fall?" asked Dr. Marshall, examining Tom's elbow, which was red and much swollen.

"In a sort of a fall—yes, sir."

"Humph! It was a queer fall that caused that," said the physician. "More like a blow or a kick, I should say. You haven't been trying to ride a horse, have you?"

"No, sir."

"Ha—hum!" ejaculated the doctor, but he asked no more questions, for he had been a college lad in his day and he knew the ethics of such matters. "You can't play ball for a couple of weeks," he went on, "and you'll have to carry that arm in a sling part of the time."

"Can't I pitch on the scrub?" asked Tom in dismay.

"Not unless you want to have an operation later," replied Dr. Marshall grimly.

Tom sighed, but said no more.

Healthy blood in healthy bodies has a marvelous way of recuperating one from injuries, and in a little over a week Tom's arm was so much improved that the doctor allowed him to dispense with the sling. In the middle of the second week Tom started in on light practice at pitching, his place meanwhile on the scrub having been filled by another player.

"Now go slow, young man," advised Dr. Marshall as Tom one day sought and obtained permission to take part in a game against the 'varsity nine. "You're only human, you know, but"—he

added to himself as Tom hurried away—"you're like a young colt. A fine physique! I wish I were young again," and the good doctor sighed for the lost days of his youth.

In the meanwhile Tom had said nothing to Langridge. He reasoned it all out—that the 'varsity pitcher might have been captured as he was, and, in breaking loose, he might have mistaken Tom for one of the sophomores. Nor did Tom communicate in any way his suspicions to his chums. He knew if he began asking questions intended to disclose whether or not Langridge had been among those captured some one would want to know his object.

"I might be mistaken," thought Tom, and he honestly hoped that he was. "Anyhow, my arm is better, and I can pitch—at least on the scrub."

The game between the first and second teams that day was a "hot" one. Langridge seemed to have recovered mastery of himself and he pitched surprisingly well. Tom, because of his hurt, was not at his best. The 'varsity lads were joyful when they beat the scrub by a big score.

"Well, now, if we do as well as that Saturday against Boxer Hall," said Kindlings Woodhouse, "we'll be all to the pepper hash, poetically speaking."

"We've got to do a great deal better than this

against Boxer," declared Coach Lighton with a shake of his head.

"Why?" asked Langridge.

"Because much depends on this game. I don't know whether you boys have figured it out, but we have a mighty slim chance for the pennant this year."

"Have we any?" asked Sid.

"Yes," replied the coach, "and it's just this. If we win the game against Boxer——"

"Which we will," declared Langridge confidently.

"If we do," went on Mr. Lighton, "and also win the one the following Saturday from Fairview, we will capture the pennant by a narrow margin."

"Hurrah!" cried Kindlings.

"Not so fast," admonished Mr. Lighton. "You boys will have to play ball as you never played it before and against rather heavy odds."

"How's that?" inquired Sid.

"Well, both games are away from your own grounds. You are to play Boxer Hall on their diamond and the Fairview game takes place over at the co-ed institution. That means that they'll have a big crowd of rooters out, and you know what an incentive that is."

"We'll take a lot too!" cried Holly Cross.

"Sure, we'll organize a cheering club," added Bricktop Molloy.

"And bring megaphones," declared Jerry Jackson.

"And phonographs," echoed his twin brother.

"Win the games, that's what you want to do!" said Mr. Lighton. "Win the games! Play ball! Bat your best, you hard hitters. You that aren't so sure, practice. Fielders, get on to every fly as if you had glue on your gloves. Kerr, play close up to the bat. Henderson, you want to practice jumping for high ones, for they do come high when the boys get excited. Langridge——"

"Yes, what about me?" drawled the pitcher.

"Pitch your very best," said Mr. Lighton, and there was a different meaning in his admonition than before. "Now don't let any chance go by without practice," he added as he turned toward the other members of the nine. "We've got our work cut out for us. I want to see Randall win the pennant."

"So do we!" shouted the others in a chorus as the coach left them.

And the days that followed were filled with anxiety and anticipation for the members of the nine and those substitutes who hoped for a chance to play. As for Tom Parsons, he felt that if he could pitch in one of the games he would ask for nothing more. But he had small hopes.

CHAPTER XXX

A GREAT GAME

SID HENDERSON fairly burst into the room where Tom Parsons was studying. The first baseman strode over to the window, looked out as though he was glaring at some attacking force and then throwing himself into a chair, exclaimed:

"It's rotten, that's what it is!"

"What?" asked Tom, looking up from his book. "Has Pitchfork been at you again about the Latin?"

"No, this is worse. I don't see how we're going to win the game to-morrow. And if we lose!"

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Tom, for he had seldom seen his chum so excited.

"Matter enough. Langridge is pitching fierce ball. We just had some light work and arranged a code of signals for him and Kerr. Why, you'd think our pitcher didn't have to practice! He seemed to think that all he had to do was to stand up in front of the Boxer players and they'd strike out just to please him. It makes me sick! But that's not the worst of it."

"Well, what is?" asked Tom, smiling at Sid's vehemence. "Might as well get it out of your system and you'll feel better."

"Oh, you know what it is as well as I do," went on Sid. "There's no use trying to ignore it any longer. I've tried to fight shy of it and so have some of the other fellows, but what's the use? It's enough to make a fellow disgusted so he'll never play on the nine again."

"You mean——" began Tom.

"I mean that Langridge isn't playing fair. He doesn't train. He's been drinking and smoking on the sly and staying up nights gambling. There's no use mincing words now. I caught him drinking in his dressing-room to-day, and he was in a blue funk for fear I'd tell. Said he had a weak heart and the doctor had told him to take it. Weak heart! Rats! He drinks because he likes it. I tell you if we don't look out, we'll be the laughing stock of the Tonoka Lake League. Langridge can put himself on edge with a drink of that vile stuff and do good work for one or two innings, maybe. Then he'll go all to pieces and where will we be? I know. We'll be tailenders, and it will be his fault. It's a shame! Some one ought to tell Lighton."

"Why don't you?" asked Tom quietly.

"Oh, you know I can't. No one could go peach like that."

"I know. I asked you about it once when I discovered what ailed Langridge. You remember what you said?"

"Yes, and I almost wish I'd told you to go and tell. The team would be better off now, even if it was against tradition and ethics and all that rot. It makes me sick! Here we are to go up against a hard proposition to-morrow and every other fellow on the team is as fit as a fiddle except Langridge. He seems to think it's a joke."

"What do the other fellows say?"

"Well, they don't know as much about him as you and I do. But they are grumbling because Langridge doesn't put enough ginger into his work."

"What about Mr. Lighton?"

"I don't know. Sometimes I think he suspects and then again I'm not sure. If he really knew what Langridge was doing, I don't believe he'd let him pitch. But you know Langridge has plenty of money and he hasn't any one like a father or mother to keep tabs on him, so he does as he pleases. He's practically supported the team this year, for we haven't made much money. I suppose that's why Kindlings stands for him as he does. Maybe that's why Mr. Lighton doesn't send him to the bench. Langridge's money will do a great deal."

"Oh, I shouldn't like to think that because of it

he is kept on the team when there's a chance of our losing the pennant."

"Neither would I. Maybe I'm wrong about the coach, but what's the use of saying anything? Langridge will pitch for us against Boxer Hall, and —no, I'll not say what I was going to. I believe if we lose that game there'll be such a howl that he won't dare pitch against Fairview. That will give you a chance, Tom, for the last game of the season."

"What about Evert?"

"Oh, he's practically out of it. He hasn't had any practice to speak of and wouldn't last two minutes. You're in good trim. You did some great work on the scrub yesterday."

"Yes, but it's not likely to amount to anything. However, I'm going along and root for you tomorrow."

"Yes, we'll need all the support we can get. I declare I'm as nervous as a girl, and I've got to buckle down and prepare for a Latin exam, too."

"Can't you let it go?"

"No, it's too risky. I'm only on the team now by the epidermis of my molars, as the poet says. If I flunk in Latin it will mean that I can't play against Fairview."

"Then don't flunk, for the team needs you."

"It needs more than me, but I'm going to try and forget it now and bone away."

Tom hoped to have the pleasure of taking Miss Tyler to the game with Boxer Hall, which was to take place on the grounds of that institution, but the girl sent back a regretful little note, saying she had arranged to go with Langridge or, at least, he was to bring her home.

"Hang it!" exclaimed Tom. "I thought she was done with him."

And, somehow, there was a rather bitter feeling in his heart as he prepared to accompany the other fellows to the great game that Saturday afternoon. He almost made up his mind that he would not bother to speak to Miss Tyler again and then he thought such a course would be silly and he tried to be more philosophical about it, though it was difficult.

Never had there been such a crowd out to witness a game on the Boxer diamond. The grandstand was packed long before the teams trotted out for practice and the bleachers were overflowing. A fringe of spectators packed the side lines, and what with the yelling and cheering of the rival factions, the waving of the colors, the tooting of the auto horns in the throng of machines that had brought parties to the contest, there was an air of excitement that might have excused even more veteran players from getting nervous, for the game meant much to both colleges. If Boxer won, it would have a chance to play Fairview for the champion-

ship, but if Randall won the privilege would fall to that college. And that both teams had determined to win goes without saying.

Almost at the last minute Coach Lighton had told Tom to get ready to go as a substitute, and it was in his field uniform then instead of his ordinary clothes that Tom went to the game. But he had slender hopes of pitching, for Langridge seemed in unusually fine form and that morning at Randall had done some good work. But the orders of the coach could not be disobeyed. So Tom took his place on the bench with the other Randall lads, and, after some practice on the field, his eyes roved over the grandstand in search of a certain face. He fancied he saw where Miss Tyler sat, but he could not be sure.

"Langridge will probably go home with her," thought Tom. "He didn't bring her here, for he came in with us."

He had little more time for thought, however, as the umpire was getting the new ball from the foil cover and was about to call the game.

Boxer had won the toss and elected to bat last, so it was the turn of the visitors to get up first and show what they could do. Langridge was greeted with a cheer from a crowd in the Randall section of the grandstand as he went to the bat. He was popular with the large mass of students in spite of his ways. He seemed in good form and there was

a confident air about him as he swung his willow stock to and fro.

"Play ball!" called the umpire.

Dave Ogden, with a calculating glance at the batsman, tied himself into rather a complicated knot and threw the horsehide. It was right over the plate and Langridge struck viciously at it, but made a clean miss. There was a groan from the Randall supporters and the team looked glum. Langridge, however, was not disconcerted. He was as confident as ever. Once more the ball was hurled toward him. He stepped right up to it, for he knew a pitcher's tricks and there was a resonant crack that made the hearts of his chums leap. He had lined out a "beaut."

"Go on! go on! go on!" yelled Coach Lighton. "Leg it, Langridge, leg it!"

Langridge was running low and well. The Boxer right fielder had muffed the ball, but made a quick recovery and threw to first. It seemed that Langridge was safe, but the umpire, who had run down toward the bag, called him out.

A groan went up from the Randall sympathizers and the team joined in.

"That'll do!" cried Captain Woodhouse sharply to his men. "Don't dispute any decisions. Leave that to me. We'll accept it. You're up, Kerr."

Kerr was a notoriously good hitter and Ogden gave him his walking papers. Sid Henderson was

next at the bat and he knocked a little pop fly, which the second baseman neatly caught, and Sid, shaking his head over his hard luck, went to the bench.

Captain Woodhouse himself was next to try, and there was a grim look on his face as he went into the box. It was justified, for he made a safe hit and went to second on a swift grounder that Dutch Housenlager knocked, the ball rolling between the shortstop's fingers. The Randalls would have scored if Bricktop Molloy had hit harder or higher, but the shortstop made as pretty a catch as was seen on the grounds that day, leaping high for the ball, and with Bricktop out it was all over, and a goose egg went up on the scoreboard as the result of the first half of the initial inning.

"Now, Langridge, don't let them get any hits off you," implored Kindlings as he and his men went to the field.

"Of course not," promised the pitcher easily.

His first ball was wild and there was an anxious feeling in the hearts of his chums. But he steadied almost at once and his next two deliveries were called strikes.

"Here's where you fan!" he called to Pinky Davenport, who was up.

"Do I? Watch me," replied Pinky, but he only hit the wind.

"That's the way to do it!" called a shrill voice from the grandstand. "Fine, Langridge!"

"All right, don't tell us what your uncle said," retorted the pitcher. "Keep that back, Fenton," for it was the boy with the ever-present relative who had yelled, and there was laughter at the pitcher's jibe.

Langridge had never done better work than in that first inning when, after passing the hardest hitter of the Boxers to first purposely, in order to make sure of one of their weakest stick-wielders, the Randall twirler struck him neatly out, and the rivals of Randall were rewarded with a neat little white circle.

In the next inning Jerry Jackson was first up and he ingloriously fanned, but Phil Clinton earned fame for himself in the annals of his *alma mater* by bringing in a home run—the only one of the game. Langridge kept up his phenomenal work and another pale zero went up for Boxer, while Randall had a single mark that loomed big before the eyes of the cheering throng.

But the hopes of those who wanted to see Randall win suffered a severe setback, for in the next two innings they could not score, while in each frame for the Boxers there were two runs chalked.

"Four to one," remarked Tom to Phil Clinton. "They're crawling up. I wonder if we have any show?"

"The game is young yet," answered Phil. "I think we will do them."

Randall got one run in the fifth and Langridge was the lucky player who brought it in. He showed his elation.

"Oh, we've got 'em on the run!" he cried, and then he went into the dressing-room. There was a queer look on Tom's face as his eyes sought those of Sid, and the latter shook his head. Coach Lighton, too, seemed anxious. He watched for the reappearance of Langridge, but his attention was occupied for a moment when Woodhouse knocked a neat fly. The captain was steaming away for first, but the ball was also on its way there and both arrived about the same time.

"Out!" cried the umpire, and a dispute at once arose. The Randalls had to give in, though it was manifestly unfair. When Langridge came out of the dressing-room there was a noticeable change in his manner. His breath smelled of cloves, and Sid, who noticed it, made a despairing gesture. A little later Housenlager hit the breeze strongly and went out, the score at the ending of the fifth inning being 4 to 2 in favor of the Boxer team.

"Now, Langridge," said the coach earnestly, "it depends on you. If you can hold them down, we are pretty sure of winning, even if we have to go ten innings, for some of our batters have Ogden's measure."

"I'll do it!" cried Langridge. "You watch me!"

But he failed miserably. He did manage to strike out two men, for there was snap and vicious vim in the way he delivered the balls, but suddenly, when the influence of the stimulant he had taken wore off, he went to pieces and the Boxers piled in five runs before they were stopped by a remarkable brace in the Randall fielding contingent.

There was a steely look in the eyes of Coach Lighton as the Randalls came in for their turn to bat in the sixth inning.

"I'll do better next time," promised Langridge, but he spoke rather languidly.

"No, you'll not!" exclaimed the coach.

"Why not?" and the pitcher seemed suddenly awakened.

"Because you're not going to pitch next inning!"

"I'm not?"

"No, you're not."

"I guess I'm manager of this team."

"And I'm the coach. I say you shan't pitch any more in this game, or, if you do, I'll resign here and now. Captain Woodhouse, are you with me in this?"

"Oh, well, can't you take a rest for a couple of innings, Fred, and pitch the last one?" asked the captain, adding: "if the Boxers will allow us to suspend the rules for you."

"If I pitch at all, I'll pitch the whole game!" cried Langridge fiercely.

"If you do I resign," was the decision of Mr. Lighton.

"Well, it's up to you," said Woodhouse with a shrug of his shoulders, as if ridding himself of the burden. "Whatever you say goes."

"All right, then I say Langridge goes to the bench. He's not fit to pitch and he knows it."

"What's the matter with me?" demanded the youth haughtily.

"Do you want me to tell?" asked Mr. Lighton quickly, with a sharp look.

Langridge, without a word, walked into the dressing-rooms.

"Parsons will pitch the remainder of the game," went on the coach to the Randall players and he made the necessary announcement to the game officials. "Tom," he called, "come on; you're up in place of Langridge."

Tom Parsons' heart gave a great throb. At last he had the chance for which he had waited so long. He was to pitch in a big game!

Tom was a good batter. He was also acquainted with many pitchers' tricks, for Mr. Lighton had given him good instruction. Tom was ready for whatever came. The first ball Ogden delivered was an incurve. Tom instinctively stepped back to avoid it, but it went neatly over the plate and a

strike was called on him. He shut his teeth hard. He reasoned that Ogden would expect him to be on the lookout the second time for an outcurve, for it might naturally be supposed that the pitcher would vary his delivery.

"But he thinks I'm looking for an out," thought Tom. "Therefore he'll give me another in. I'll be ready for it."

He was. He stepped right into the next ball, which was an incurve, and with a mighty sweep sent it sailing far over the right fielder's head. It was good for three bases and Tom took them.

"Go on! Keep running! That's a beaut! Take another! Make it a homer!" yelled the crowd, which was on its feet shouting like mad, waving hats, hands, handkerchiefs and college colors.

"Stay there!" cautioned Coach Lighton, for the ball was being relayed home.

Tom's sensational hit seemed to put new life into the team and Bricktop Molloy also brought in a run. That, however, ended the good work.

Then came Tom's turn in the box. That he was a little nervous was natural, but he kept control of himself and only allowed one hit, though it was good eventually for a run. There was a noticeable stiffening in the work of the team and the coach congratulated Tom as he came in with his chums to take their turn at the bat again.

The seventh inning saw four runs safely laid

away for Randall, while the marker put up a neat little ring in the square for Boxer, for Tom struck out two of the three men who were up, one going out on a pop fly, the pitcher having misjudged his batter. Neither side scored in the eighth, and when Randall got three runs in the ninth, and, in spite of strenuous work on the part of Tom, the Boxers got one run that same inning, the score was tied—11 to 11.

"Ten innings! They've got to play ten innings!" went the cry around the field. Then came more cheers. It was a game of games and it began to look as if the hoodoo against Randall was broken and that the college had a chance for the pennant.

"Three cheers for Tom Parsons!" yelled Ford Fenton, and what a shout there was!

"What would your uncle think of him?" asked a student.

"He'd say he was all right!" rejoined Ford good-naturedly.

Randall got one run in the tenth, putting them ahead, and then came a supreme struggle for Tom. Coolly and calculatingly he delivered the balls. He struck out the first man, who viciously threw down his bat so hard that it splintered. The second man also went the same way, and there was a salvo of cheers that shook the stands, while the

stamping of feet of the anxious ones threatened to bring down the structures.

Tom measured his next man and sent in a neat little drop. But the batter was a veteran and got under it in time. He sent it well out into the field.

"Take it, Jerry! Take it!" cried the coach, for the horsehide seemed about to fall into the right fielder's hands. But he muffed it, and what a howl there was! George Stoddard, who had knocked it, kept on to second, for which he had to slide, but he was called safe. Then Tom was obliged to pass the next man to first, for he was an excellent hitter, while the one who followed him was not. But just then one of those "accidents" that are always cropping up in sport happened and the poor hitter made good, knocking a curious little twisting fly that the first baseman misjudged, and the run came in, again tieing the score. But no more Boxer players crossed home plate.

It was with a "do or die" expression on all the faces of the Randalls that they came to bat in the eleventh inning. The story of that game is college history now, and how Tom brought in a run after a magnificent hit that would have been a "homer" but for the fleetness of the opposing center fielder's feet is told to many a freshman. They could do no more, though, after getting one ahead.

It needed but a single run on the part of the

Boxers to tie the score and two to win. But Tom resolved that they should not get even that one tally. He went to his box, his teeth clenched, making his jaw look firm and square. He resolved to try a new sort of twisting curve that he had used several times against the 'varsity. Each time it had proved deceptive. He worked it on the first man and sent him ingloriously to the bench. Then the second batter fell for it, but Tom dared not try it on the third. He felt himself getting nervous, and his next delivery was a bit wild. A ball was called on him, but that was all. The next three deliveries were strikes, and the batter, though he fanned desperately at them, missed each time.

"That settles it!" cried Phil Clinton as Tom, with a wildly throbbing heart, walked out of the box, while a hush fell over the assemblage, for the crowd could hardly realize that the game was over and that Randall had won by a score of 13 to 12.

"Good work, Parsons! Oh, pretty work!" yelled a host of supporters, and then such cheering as there was!

"Come, fellows, a cheer for Boxer Hall!" cried Captain Woodhouse, and it was given, followed by the college yell.

Boxer generously retaliated, and as the teams ran for the dressing-rooms Langridge, pale and with trembling hands, stepped out. He was

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dressed in his street garments, and without a word to his chums, he started across the diamond for the grandstand.

"He's going over to her," thought Tom, and the joy of the victory he had helped to win was embittered for him.

"Parsons, you did splendidly!" cried Mr. Lighton. "I congratulate you with all my heart. If it hadn't been for you, we'd have lost the game."

"Oh, I don't know about that."

"Yes, we would. You're the regular pitcher on this team for the remainder of the season, subject, of course, to the confirmation of Captain Woodhouse."

"Whatever you say," assented Kindlings, but he looked a bit uncomfortable.

"There are only two more games," went on the coach, "one out of town next Saturday, and then comes the final struggle with Fairview. If we win that, we'll have the pennant."

"Oh, we'll win!" cried Holly Cross. "Look who's going to pitch for us."

"I don't know about that," replied Tom with a laugh, but he was silenced with cheers.

"Well, I want you to win that game," concluded the coach as he walked off the diamond and the team got ready to go back to Randall.

CHAPTER XXXI

LANGRIDGE APPEALS

WHILE the stage coach in which the players had come from Randall was being gotten ready to take the victorious nine back Tom strolled across the diamond toward the grandstand. He wanted to be alone for a moment and think, for he had many ideas in his mind, and they were not all connected with his recent work in the pitcher's box. A certain bright-eyed girl figured largely in them.

"I thought she'd given him up," he said to himself. "Well, of course, it's none of my affair, but——"

There generally was a "but," Tom felt. The crowd was nearly gone and he was about to turn back and join his chums.

Suddenly he became aware of a girlish figure alone in the big stand. He looked to make sure who it was, for at the first glimpse he had felt that it was she of whom he was thinking. As he did so the girl looked at him. It was Miss Tyler, and Tom noticed that there were tears in her eyes. He

saw nothing of Langridge as he hastened toward her.

"Why, Madge—Miss Tyler!" he exclaimed, "what is the matter? Have you lost anything? Are you alone? I thought Fred Langridge was going——"

She stamped her little foot.

"Please don't speak his name to me!" she exclaimed.

Tom opened his eyes.

"Why—why——" he stammered.

"He came over to me in—in no proper condition to escort me home," she went on tearfully. "Oh, Tom, I'm—I'm so miserable!"

She acted as though she were going to break down and cry in real earnest, and Tom was on the anxious edge, for he hated to see girls weep. But she mastered herself with an effort.

"May I take you back to Haddonfield?" he asked.

"Yes," she said, and she came down from the upper part of the stand to join him. They walked off the field, both silent for a time, and Tom was wondering what would be the safest subject to talk about. But Miss Tyler spoke first.

"You did fine work," she said. "I'm—I'm glad you got the chance to pitch."

"So am I," declared Tom, "but I'm sorry

for——" He did not know whether or not to mention his rival's name. But she understood.

"So am I—I'm very sorry for him. It's all his horrid money that's doing it. He wants to be what the boys call a 'sport.' But he isn't. He's unfair to himself—to me. But I'm done with him! I shall never speak to him again."

Tom was both glad and sorry.

"Do you think you will win from Fairview?" asked the girl after a pause.

"I think so."

"I hope you do. I want to see that game, but I don't——"

"Won't you let me take you?" asked Tom quickly. "We are going in a number of autos and there'll be lots of room."

"Oh, I didn't mean to hint so broadly," she exclaimed, and her face crimsoned.

"I was going to ask you, anyhow," declared Tom. "Will you go?"

"Yes," she replied softly.

"And help me to pitch to win," added Tom, and he tried to look into her face, but she averted her eyes.

There was great celebrating in Randall that night. Some of the boys wanted to light historic bonfires along the river, which blazes were always kindled on great occasions, but Mr. Lighton reminded the lads that they had still to win the con-

test with Fairview before they would be champions, and he urged that the game was no easy one. So milder forms of making glad were substituted. Tom was the hero of the hour, and he felt that there had been made up to him everything that he had suffered in being kept so long on the scrub.

It was dark in the apartments of Langridge. No one had seen him since the game and few cared about him.

"He got just what was coming to him," declared Sid vindictively. "He'd have thrown the game for a drink of liquor and a cigarette. Pah! I've no use for such a chap."

"Well, maybe he didn't mean to do it," replied Tom, who could afford to be generous. "He may have taken some to steady his nerves and it went to his head."

"Rats! It ought to have gone to his pitching arm. But I've got to bone away. Exams are getting nearer and nearer every day, and the closer they come the less I seem to know about Latin. From now on I'm going to think, eat, sleep and dream in Latin."

The following Saturday the team went to the Indian school at Carlisle and played a game with the red men. It was a hard-fought battle and the aborigines made the mistake of putting in a lot of substitutes for the first few innings, for they had a poor opinion of Randall. But the visitors rolled

up a good score and Tom was a whirlwind at pitching, holding the red men down to a low score. Then the Indians awakened and sent in some of their best players, but the Randalls had the game "in the refrigerator," as Holly Cross said, and took it home with them, despite the war cries of the redskins and their efforts to annex the scalp-locks of the palefaces.

The winning of this game against what was generally considered to be a much stronger team than that of Randall did much to infuse an aggressive spirit into the latter players. The trip, too, acted as a sort of tonic.

"Boys, I think we're fit to make the fight of our lives a week from to-day," declared Captain Woodhouse as he and the team were on their way back to college. "We'll wipe the diamond up with Fairview and then maybe that banner won't look fine at the top of our flagstaff."

"That's what!" cried Phil Clinton. "I'm ready to play 'em now."

"Same here!" cried Pete Backus, giving a great jump up into the air, seemingly to justify his title of "Grasshopper."

"My uncle says——" began Ford Fenton, but Holly Cross gave such an imitation of an Indian war whoop that what the former coach had said was lost "in the shuffle."

"Great work, old man!" cried Phil Clinton to

Tom as he linked his arm in that of the new 'varsity pitcher.

"That was a fine catch of yours, to return the compliment," said Tom with a laugh.

"Don't go forming a mutual admiration society," advised Mr. Lighton. "Play ball—that's the thing to do."

"It's queer what's become of Langridge," remarked Tom to Sid when they were in their room a few nights later, talking over the approaching final game with Fairview. "He seems to have dropped out of sight."

"That's where he'd better stay," declared Sid. "He'll never be any more account to the team. We'll have a new manager when we whip Fairview."

"If we only do!"

"Oh, we will. I only hope I can play."

"Why, is there any chance that you won't?"

"Well, I'm pretty shaky in Latin, and Pitchfork has warned me that if I slump, it's me to the bench for the rest of this term. I'm going over and see Bricktop Molloy. He's a fiend at Latin. Rather study it than eat. He's been coaching me lately, and I want to get the benefit of it. So I'll just go and bone with him a bit."

"Go ahead, old man. Wish I could help you, but I've got to look after my own rations. I'm none too safe."

Sid went out and Tom was left alone with his books. But somehow he could not study. He took no sense of the printed page. There was an uneasiness in his mind and he could not put his thoughts into form.

"Hang it all!" he exclaimed, "I guess I'm thinking too much of baseball."

He got up to take a turn in the corridors to change the current of his thoughts when there came a knock at the door.

"Come!" he cried, thinking it would prove to be some of his chums. The portal slowly swung and Tom, looking at the widening crack, saw the pale face of Langridge.

"May I come in?" asked the former pitcher, and his voice trembled.

"Of course," answered Tom heartily. "Where have you been keeping yourself?"

"It doesn't much matter. I—I've come to ask a favor of you, Parsons."

"A favor of me?"

"Yes, and it's a mighty big one."

There was a dogged, determined air about him as he stood there facing his rival who had supplanted him, and Tom wondered what was coming next.

"Why, I'll do anything I can for you, Langridge, of course."

"Wait until you hear what I want. There's no

use beating about the bush, Parsons. I've been mighty mean to you. I've played a low-down hand against you, but I'm not going to apologize—not now. I thought it was fair—in war, you know. I didn't want you to pitch in my place, but you've done me out of it."

"I think I acted square," said Tom quietly.

"Yes, you did. You were white. I wasn't. I didn't play fair about that wire nor yet about sneaking in the dormitory that night. You did. I suppose you know—about the night you were captured—the night of the freshman dinner."

"I think you knew it was I before you——" began Tom.

"Yes, I knew it was you before I kicked you," went on Langridge, and he spoke as if he was getting through a disagreeable confession. "I—I didn't mean to boot you so hard, though. I thought maybe you'd give up pitching if you got a good crack on the arm, but you didn't."

"No, I'm not that kind."

"So I see. Well, you've got what you wanted and I got what I never expected. Now I want you to do me a favor."

"What is it?"

"I want you to refuse to pitch in the Fairview game."

Tom wondered whether he had heard aright.

"You want me to refuse——" he began.

"That's it," went on Langridge eagerly. "Tell Kindlings—tell Lighton you can't pitch—that your arm has given out."

"But it hasn't."

"Never mind. Tell them. Tell them anything, as long as you don't pitch."

"And why don't you want me to pitch? Do you want to see your college lose? Not because I'm the best pitcher that ever happened, but you know there's no one else they can put in at this late day."

"Yes, there is."

"Who?"

"Me! I'll pitch. I want to pitch. I've just got to. You don't know what it means to me. Let me pitch this last game. Please, Parsons! It won't mean much to you and it means everything to me. I can do it. See, I—I haven't touched a drop since—since the Boxer game. I've been getting in shape. I'm as steady as a rock. I can pitch the game of my life. Come, do! Say you won't pitch. They'll give me a chance then. I want to get in the last game—and win. Will you? Will you let me get in this last game in your place?"

He was leaning forward, his hands held out to Tom, his rival, begging a boon of him.

"Will you resign in my favor?" he asked. "I know it's a big request, but will you, Parsons?"

Tom did not know what to answer.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE FINAL CONTEST

LANGRIDGE stood before his rival, waiting. It was quiet in the little room, so quiet that the ticking of the alarm clock sounded loud. Outside could be heard the tramp of feet in the corridor, students going to and fro. Langridge glanced nervously at the door. He was plainly afraid lest some one should enter and find him there.

It was a hard problem for Tom to solve. The appeal of the lad who had done much to injure him moved him strongly. He knew what it would mean to Langridge not to pitch—that he would be out of athletics for the rest of his college course. If Tom gave way in his favor, it would mean his rehabilitation and for Tom only a temporary loss of prestige.

"Will you do it?" asked Langridge softly.

Tom did not answer. He paced up and down the room. What ought he to say? He felt that he could afford to sacrifice his own interests—could even forego the high honor of pitching in what was the greatest game of the college year—for the

sake of Langridge. If he did not and if Langridge went away disheartened, it might mean that he would plunge deeper into dissipation. Then there came to Tom the thought of the nine. Was it fair to the others, to the college?

Something told him it was not, that it was his duty to pitch—to do his best—to win for the sake of the college and the nine. Langridge might possibly do it, but it was doubtful. The former pitcher could not be sure of himself, sure that he had mastered his desire for stimulant. Then Tom decided, not on his own account but for the sake of the team and the college.

"I can't do it, Langridge," he replied, and his voice showed the anguish he felt at the pain he inflicted.

"Then you'll pitch?" asked his rival.

"Yes, I feel that I must. The team depends on me, and—and I can't go back on them."

Langridge must have seen that Tom's answer was final, for without a word he turned and left the room.

Then Tom felt a wave of remorse sweep over him. After all, had he done right? Had he done the best thing? He was almost on the point of rushing after Langridge and telling him he could pitch in the final game, for the memory of his face haunted Tom. But when his hand was on the knob of the door Sid entered.

"What's the matter?" asked Tom's chum, looking curiously at him.

"Nothing. Why?"

"You look as if you had been seeing ghosts."

"Well, I have—a sort of one," answered Tom with an uneasy laugh. "How'd you make out with the Latin?"

"Pretty punk, I guess. Bricktop says I've got to put in all my spare time boning. If I slump and can't play that last game, I'll—I'll——"

"Don't you dare slump!" cried Tom earnestly. "We can't put a new man on first at this late day. Don't you dare slump, Sid."

"Oh, I'll try not to," and Sid dumped himself down in the easy chair and with an air of dogged determination began devouring Latin verbs.

The 'varsity had had its final practice against the scrub, with Tom in the box for the first team. He was beginning to take it as a matter of course and acquiring that which he needed most—confidence in himself. The scrub pitcher who had replaced him was good, but he was pretty well batted, while very few hits, and these only one-baggers, were secured off Tom.

"Boys," said Mr. Lighton two days before the game, "I think I can see our way clear to the Tonoka Lake League pennant. Now take it easy to-morrow, a little light exercise, be careful of what you eat, don't get nervous, go to bed early

and sleep well. Then Saturday afternoon we'll go to Fairview and bring back the banner."

"Three cheers for our coach!" called Kerr, and Mr. Lighton, veteran that he was, blushed with pleasure.

"I hope we win," remarked Ford Fenton as the team walked to the dressing-rooms. "My uncle says——"

But Kerr threw his big catching mitt with such good aim that it struck Fenton full in the face.

"Here—huh! ho! What'd you do that for?" he demanded.

"I didn't want you to wear out that uncle of yours," was the cool answer. "It's getting warm weather now and you'd better can him so he'll keep until next year."

Ford scowled and then laughed, for he was good-natured in spite of his one failing.

Sid entered the room where Tom was late that afternoon with a worried look on his face.

"What's the matter?" asked Tom in alarm.

"Pitchfork has decided to have a special Latin exam to-morrow for my class. Wow! I was counting on it going over, but it won't, and I've got to take it to-morrow."

"Well?"

"No, not well—bad. If I slump, do you know what it means?"

"You can't play against Fairview?"

"Exactly. Oh, Tom, I'm as nervous as a girl before her first big party. Here, coach me a bit," and Tom, taking the books, gave Sid what help he could until they were both so tired and sleepy that Tom insisted that bed was the only place for them.

The news spread the next day. Sid was the only member of the team who was in the special Latin class, and consequently the only one who had to go through the ordeal. When he went into recitation his mates on the team gathered in silent conclave on the diamond.

"If Sid slumps," spoke Captain Woodhouse, "I don't——"

"Don't talk about it," pleaded Bricktop Molloy.

"If he does, couldn't we play Langridge on first?" suggested Phil Clinton. "He used to practice there."

"Langridge is down and out," declared Kerr. "I don't know what's come over him. He won't speak to me any more. I guess he knows he's got to do a lot of studying to pass, and he must be tutoring with some grind. He keeps himself mighty scarce. I don't believe he'd play."

"No, we couldn't use him," said Kindlings. "It all depends on Sid. I wish the exam was over. It's like waiting for a jury to come in."

The whole team was on tenterhooks. No one felt like talking, and some one would start a topic only to witness it die a natural death. The mem-

bers of the nine paced to and fro on the diamond. They were waiting for news from Sid. If he did not pass he could not play, and it practically meant a lowering of their chances for the pennant.

An hour went by. A few lads began coming from the recitation room where the examination was being held.

"Some of them have finished," commented Tom. "Let's ask 'em how Sid's making out."

One of the Latin students strolled over toward where the ball players were.

"How's Henderson doing?" asked Kindlings.

"Sweating like a cart horse," was the characteristic answer. "It's a stiff exam all right."

There was a groan in concert and the anxious waiting was resumed. Fifteen minutes passed. Several more students had come from the room.

"Where can he be?" murmured Tom.

"There he comes!" cried Phil Clinton as Sid appeared, coming slowly toward the group.

"I'll bet he failed," said Kindlings solemnly. Certainly in Sid's approach there was not the air of a conqueror.

All at once he stopped, bent down to the ground and appeared to be tearing something to pieces.

"What's he doing?" asked Tom.

"Let's go see," proposed Kerr.

They advanced and beheld a curious sight. Sid was tearing up a book and making a little heap of

the leaves. A moment later he touched a match to the pile, and the paper began to burn.

"What in the world are you doing?" called Tom.

"Did you pass?" fairly roared Kindlings.

"Sure," replied Sid as calmly as if he had always expected to. "I passed with honors, and now I'm destroying the evidence. I'm applying the torch to Cæsar's Commentaries and I'll never open a book like it again in my life. Come on, fellows, join the festive throng. Tra la la! Merrily do we sing."

He began prancing about and the others, with yells of joy, joined in. Sid would cover first base for them in the big game.

With a tooting of auto horns, the waving of many flags, shouts, cheers, yells of encouragement, laughter from many pretty girls, the waving of handkerchiefs, renditions of the college yell the ball nine and its supporters started the next day in a long cavalcade for Fairview.

Several automobiles had been provided for the use of the team, and in one of these rode Tom and Miss Tyler, whom he had called for at her home that morning. A number of ladies went along as chaperones for the girls of Haddonfield.

Dr. Churchill and most of the faculty also went to the game.

"Aren't you coming, Professor Tines?" asked

the head of the college as he and the other instructors were about to start.

"No, I don't care much for baseball. I shall remain here and arrange for another Latin examination for some of the students."

Sid groaned and his chums laughed, whereat Professor Tines frowned.

"Do you think you'll win?" asked Miss Tyler as she sat next to Tom.

"I'm sure of it," he answered promptly.

When the Randall team and its supporters arrived they found a big throng present to greet them. Even their opponents sent out a ringing cheer of welcome. The Fairview nine was out on the diamond practicing.

"Snappy work," observed Tom critically as the batting and catching was under way.

"Oh, we can do just as good," asserted Kindlings. "Don't get nervous now. You've got to pitch your head off."

Some one started the Randall college song, *"Aut vincere aut mori,"* and as the beautiful strains floated over the diamond when the players poured out from the dressing-rooms the team came to a sudden halt.

"That's it, fellows," said Kindlings solemnly, " 'Either we conquer or we die!' Play for all that's in you and then some more," and he laughed.

Auto horns tooted blatantly, girls cried in their

clear, shrill voices, the lady contingent of Fairview rendering some weird yells. Then there were the hoarse voices of the boys, to which answered the cheers of Randall. The grandstand and bleachers were waving geometrical figures of brilliant hues. It was an inspiring sight. No wonder that the players felt nerved to do their best, for on the result of the game depended much.

Kindlings missed the call when the coin was spun, and he and his men had to start the hitting. But they did not mind this, and when, in the revised batting order, Kerr went up first, he "poked his stick into the horsehide for a two-bagger," as Holly Cross said. There was a yell that could have been heard a mile and every Randall lad was on his feet shouting:

"Go on! go on! go on!"

But Kerr stopped at second prudently, for he would have been nabbed at third. This opened the game and the play at once became hot. Randall scored two runs that inning and Tom, giving walking papers to a particularly heavy hitter, managed to come out of the initial ordeal without a hit being registered against him.

The Randall boys went wild then and began the song, "When Fairview awoke from her sweet dream of peace," which was repeated again and again.

But the next three innings saw only the nega-

tive sign chalked up in the frame on the score-board given over to Randall, while in the last half of the fourth Fairview secured a run, for one of the players "got the Indian sign" on Tom, to quote Holly Cross, who was an expert in diamond slang, and "bit his initials in the spheroid for a three-bagger." The run would not have been scored, for there were two men out, only Joe Jackson made what seemed to be an inexcusable fumble, and the runner came in. Still it looked safe for Randall until the fatal seventh inning.

For some teams this is held to be a lucky one, but it was not for Randall. Tom was doing his best, but in delivering one ball he gave his arm a peculiar wrench, and a sharp twinge of pain in the region where Langridge had kicked him made him wince. After that he could not control his curves so well, and three men made safeties off him, a trio of runs being registered. The score was 4 to 2 in favor of Fairview at the close of the seventh. Kindlings looked grave and Coach Lighton paced nervously to and fro.

"What's the matter, old man?" the captain asked Tom.

"Nothing much," was the answer. "I gave my arm a little twist, that's all."

"Come inside and we'll massage it," proposed Mr. Lighton, who was always ready for emergencies, and he and Kindlings rubbed some liniment

on Tom's joint. It felt a little better, and Tom said so, though when he went into the box, following an inning when Bricktop Molloy brought in one run, the pitcher was in considerable misery. He shut his teeth grimly, however, and resolved to do his best, though to deliver his most effective curves meant to give himself much pain.

Tom only allowed two hits and one run came in, making the score at the ending of the eighth inning 5 to 3 in favor of Fairview.

How the co-eds shouted and cheered then and there was corresponding gloom among the Randallites until once more that grand old song, *"Aut vincere aut mori,"* welled forth and gave confidence to an almost despairing nine.

"It's about our last chance, fellows," said Kindlings grimly as he walked to the bat.

He waited for a good ball, though two strikes were called on him, and then, with a mighty sweep of his strong arms, he sent the sphere away out into the field.

"A good hit! Oh, a pretty hit!" yelled Phil Clinton. "Run, old man! Run!"

And how Kindlings could run! On and on he leaped, around first base, speeding toward second, while the stands were in a frenzy of excitement.

"Third! third!" cried the coach, for the left fielder was still after the ball.

Kindlings was running strong, and he had now

started home. Would he reach it? The fielder had the ball now. With a terrific heave he sent it to the third baseman, but Kindlings was half way home. Then ensued a curious scene. The baseman was afraid to throw the ball to the catcher, for Kindlings, who was tall and was running upright, was in the way. The baseman started to trail the captain down. There was a race. Kindlings looked back and decided to keep on to home. The catcher was leaping about excitedly.

"Throw the ball! throw the ball!" he yelled. But the baseman thought he could outrun Kindlings. He almost succeeded and then, when he saw it was too late, he tossed the ball over the captain's head to the catcher. Kindlings dropped and, amid a cloud of dust, slid home.

Like a flash the hand of the catcher holding the ball shot toward him. There was a moment of suspense.

"Safe!" howled the umpire, and one more run went to the credit of Randall.

Tom brought in another not so sensational, but it counted. He knocked a pretty fly, which sailed over the second baseman's head and the pitcher got to first, stole second and came in with a rush on a swift grounder bunt that Phil Clinton sacrificed on under orders.

CHAPTER XXXIII

VICTORY

"THE score is tie! the score is tie!" came the yells. And so it was—5 to 5 in the last half of the ninth inning. From the Randall stand came the chorus of the song, "We have their measure, we'll beat them at pleasure!"

The game, however, was far from won. There were a bunch of heavy hitters to come to the bat, and Tom's arm was in poor shape. But he said nothing and walked to the box with a step as light as though he knew he was to win.

When he gave two men their bases on balls there was some groaning among the Randallites, but Tom knew what he was doing. Lem Sellig and Frank Sullivan were generally good for safeties, and he could afford to take no chances. He had the measure of the next three men and he took it.

Seldom had the devotees of the diamond witnessed such pitching as the exhibition which Tom gave after he had allowed the heavy hitters to walk. No one ever knew what he suffered as he

delivered his most effective curves, but the cheering that resulted when he had struck his third man out, without allowing a player to get to third base, must have warmed his heart.

"A ten-inning game!" was the cry, for the score still stood tie. Over in the grandstand Ford Fenton, who was cheer leader, called for the "Brace, brace, brace" song and it came in a mighty chorus.

"Only one run! only one!" pleaded hundreds of Randall lads. "One run to beat 'em, and then Tom Parsons will strike 'em out!"

Tom heard it and smiled. His arm had been given another rubbing, and though it pained him, he went to the bat first in the tenth inning with a confident step. Somewhere on the grandstand he knew a girl was watching him, and he tried to single her out. Could that be she standing up and waving a yellow and maroon flag at him? He hoped so, and he gritted his teeth, resolving to hit the ball for all that was in him.

There was a steely look in the pitcher's eye as he delivered a vicious ball to Tom. Tom saw it coming and stepped up to it. He remembered a former experience. His bat got under it and he lifted and hit it outwardly in a long, upward curve.

"Too high! too high! He's gone!" murmured Kindlings sadly, but Tom was off for first like a deer. In some unaccountable manner the right fielder muffed the ball and there were groans of

anguish. Tom started for second, but was warned back. Later he did manage to "purloin the bag like a second-story man getting away with a diamond necklace," to quote Holly Cross, and went to third on a pop fly by Housenlager, who never got to first. Then, on a sacrifice hit by Kerr, Tom slid home, the dust cloud being so thick that the spectators could not witness the play.

"Safe!" declared the umpire, and this meant that a run had been added to the score for Randall, making the tally 6 to 5 in their favor. Tom was pale when he arose.

"Hurt?" asked Kindlings anxiously.

"No," was the answer, but Tom had to bite his lips to keep back a groan of pain. He had jarred his sore arm badly.

Though Randall tried desperately to better the score, it was not to be. Their only hope now lay in keeping their opponents from making a run, and, if they did, they would have the game and the championship.

Tom felt as if he would collapse, and his first ball, instead of being a puzzling drop as he intended, went straight over the plate distressingly slow, so that Ted Puder, captain of the Fairview team, hit it mightily. Up and up it went, a black speck against the blue sky, while the youths and maidens of the institute were yelling encouragingly to the runner, who had started for first.

"Oh, if he only gets it! If he only can get it!" murmured Kindlings as he watched Phil Clinton race after the ball.

It was a long, high fly, and Phil had to sprint well toward the back field to even get under it. He had turned and was racing with all his might. Would he judge it properly? Could he hold it after he got it?

He had turned again, and with his eye on the ball was running backward now. He stumbled over a stone and seemed about to fall. There was a groan from the Randallites, but Phil recovered himself. The ball was almost over his head when he saw that he had not gone far enough back. It was too late to take another step, but Phil did the next best thing. He leaped up, and, with his right hand extended as far as it would stretch, he caught the ball. It was a mighty fine play and the yells and applause that followed testified to it.

"Runner's out!" decided the umpire.

Tom breathed easier. His heart had been in his throat when he saw what had happened to the first ball he delivered. But Phil had made good.

"What a magnificent catch!" exclaimed Dr. Churchill as he adjusted his glasses, that had been knocked off in the excitement.

"Yes," admitted another member of the faculty who sat near him. "And how Clinton can run! I'd like to see him on the gridiron."

"Perhaps you will," went on Dr. Churchill. "The boys will soon organize the eleven."

Tom's nerve came back to him. Now he didn't mind the pain in his arm. There was one man out and Tom's team was a run ahead. If he could only strike out two more men the championship would be safe.

The next batter was easy, for he was a poor hitter, and Tom soon sent him to the bench. The following player was one of the best stick-wielders Fairview had.

"If I can only get him," thought the pitcher.

Warily Tom delivered to him an inshoot. It was missed cleanly, but a look in the batter's eye warned the pitcher that another such curve would not fool him. Tom sent in a puzzling drop and the batter struck over it.

"Two strikes!" called the umpire, amid almost breathless silence.

Kerr signaled for another incurve, but Tom shook his head. He was going to deliver a style of ball he had used but once before that day because it twisted his arm fiercely. It was a sort of "fade-away" ball, made famous by a great professional player.

Tom drew his arm back, having gripped the ball strongly. The action made him wince with pain, but there was no time now to stop for that. Out straightened his muscles and the horsehide left his

hand swiftly. He knew it was a good ball, but in spite of that he almost feared lest he should hear the fatal "ping" as the bat hit it or listen to the umpire's "ball one." Tom felt that he could not toss another curve. His arm was numb and tingled away up to his shoulder. He saw a black wall looming up before his eyes and there was a ringing in his ears.

But above the tumult he heard a voice shouting:

"Three strikes! Batter's out!"

Oh, what yelling there was! How the handkerchiefs and banners fluttered! How the girls' shrill voices mingled with the deep cheering of the boys! What a stamping of feet on the grandstand!

Then out from the tumult came booming that heart-stirring song of Randall: "We have come and we have conquered!"

Tom staggered as he pulled off his glove and walked toward the bench. His mouth was parched and dry.

"Oh, good old man!" yelled Kindlings, rushing up and embracing him. "Oh, fine! Oh, great! Oh, oh, oh! Wow!"

"Up with him, fellows!" called Sid Henderson. "On our shoulders!"

"No, no!" protested Tom.

But he might as well have talked to the wind. They lifted him up and marched with him around

the field, singing again: "We have come and we have conquered!"

"Now, fellows, a good round of cheers for Fairview," proposed Kindlings, and the team, gathering in a circle about Tom, who had managed to descend to the ground, raised their voices in a tribute to those over whom they had been victorious.

From where they were gathered, downcast but not disheartened at their defeat, the Fairview team sent back an answering cheer. Then came more songs from the contingent of Randall students, and many an "old grad" walked with a prouder step that day, for once more, after many seasons, the bird of victory had come back to hover over the college on the river and the championship banner would float from the flagstaff on the campus.

Tom and his chums dispersed to dress. A crowd surrounded the victorious pitcher.

"Let me congratulate you, Parsons," said Dr. Churchill, making his way through the throng. "You have brought honor to the college," and he shook Tom's hand heartily.

"The rest of them did as much as I," replied Tom modestly. "If it hadn't been for Clinton's run, I'm afraid we'd have lost after all."

"You get out!" cried Phil.

"May I also congratulate you?" asked a voice at Tom's elbow, and he turned to see Miss Tyler.

His face, which was pale from pain, flushed, and as she held out her hand he hesitated, for his was all stained from the dirt of the ball, while hers was daintily gloved.

"As if I minded that!" she cried as she saw him hesitate, and she took his hand in both hers, to the no small damage of the new gloves.

"I knew you'd do it," she said, while she smiled happily. "Oh, Tom, I'm so glad!"

"So am I," he answered, and after that the pain in his arm did not seem so bad.

What a triumphant procession it was that wended its way toward Randall that afternoon! How song followed song and cheer was piled upon cheer! Tom sat in the corner of a big auto, with Miss Tyler at his side. He had to put his arm in a sling and he was overwhelmed with questions as to how he felt, while the number of sweaters offered him as cushions would have stocked a furnishing store.

"Oh, boy, but you're a daisy!" exclaimed Sid a few hours later when he and Tom, after a good bath, were resting in their room.

"As if you didn't cover first base as it never has been covered before," declared Tom.

"Oh, well, that was easy for me after I passed that Latin exam. But you and your arm—I don't see how you did it."

"And don't forget Phil Clinton. That was one of the greatest runs and catches I ever saw."

"Oh, yes, it certainly was great. But did you hear the news? Phil isn't going to play any more, at least for the present."

"Why not?"

"He is going into training for our football eleven this fall. Some of the older heads think he'll make a great player."

"I've no doubt he will," said Tom. "He's built for it." And what Tom said was true, as we shall learn in our next tale, to be called "A Quarter-back's Pluck." In that story we shall meet Tom and Sid and all the boys of Randall College again and also Miss Madge Tyler, and learn the particulars of several fiercely contested games on the grid-iron.

"No, sir, I don't really see how you did it," repeated Sid, "with such a sore arm as that."

"I don't see, either," answered Tom, but he knew that the memory of a certain girl had done as much to keep him up as had his desire to make his team win.

Some one knocked at the door.

"More congratulatory calls," said Sid as he went to open it.

"May I come in?" asked a voice, and Langridge stood in the corridor. Tom arose from the couch where he was lying.

"Come on in," he said quietly.

"I—I just want to congratulate you, dominie," he said, and he smiled a little, but there was a curious note in his voice. "You did magnificent work. I could never have equaled it in a thousand years. Will you shake hands?"

Sid wondered at the queer air of restraint about Langridge, but Tom understood, and there was heartiness and forgiveness in the grip that followed.

"I've resigned as manager," went on Langridge. "I—I hope they'll elect you, dominie. We won't be rivals any more."

"Are you going to leave college?" asked Sid curiously.

"No. I'm going to give up athletics for a while, though, and become a grind. I've been beaten two ways lately," he went on. "Parsons is a better pitcher than I am, and—and——" but he did not finish, though Tom knew he referred to Miss Tyler. Then Langridge went out and Sid and Tom played the game all over again in talk.

Suddenly there was a shout out on the campus. Tom looked from the window.

"What is it?" asked Sid.

"They're getting ready for the procession and the bonfires along the river. Come on."

The two chums rushed downstairs, Phil Clin-

ton joining them on the way. Out on the green was a throng of students, every one in the college.

"Three cheers for Tom Parsons, the best pitcher that ever tossed a ball!" called some one.

How the yells resounded again and again, with innumerable tigers and other wild and ferocious beasts added!

"Fall in! fall in! Down to the fires along the river!" commanded Captain Woodhouse. "Oh, but this is a great day!"

"That's what," added Ford Fenton. "My uncle says——"

But his voice was drowned in the shout that followed, and then came that inspiring song, *"Aut vincere aut mori."*

And many fires of victory blazed along Sunny River that night.

THE END

The College Sports Series

By Lester Chadwick

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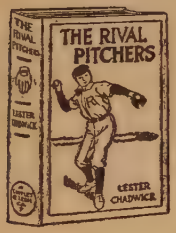

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Of all college sports, football is undoubtedly king, and in this tale Mr. Chadwick has risen to the occasion by giving us something that is bound to grip the reader from start to finish.

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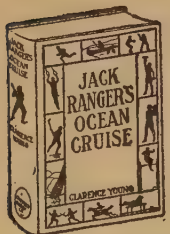

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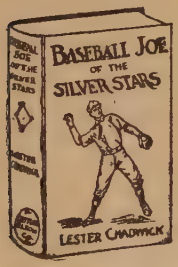

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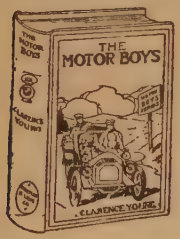

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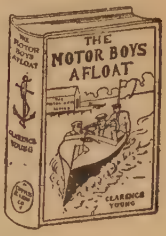

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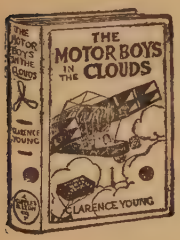

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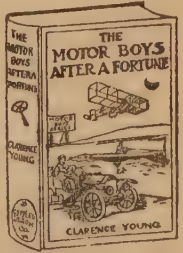

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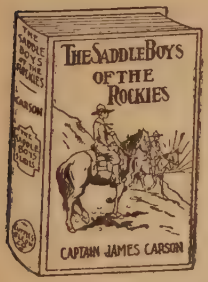

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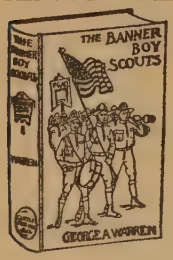

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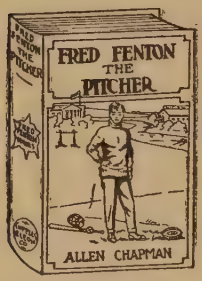

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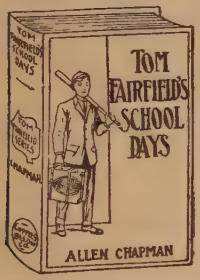

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